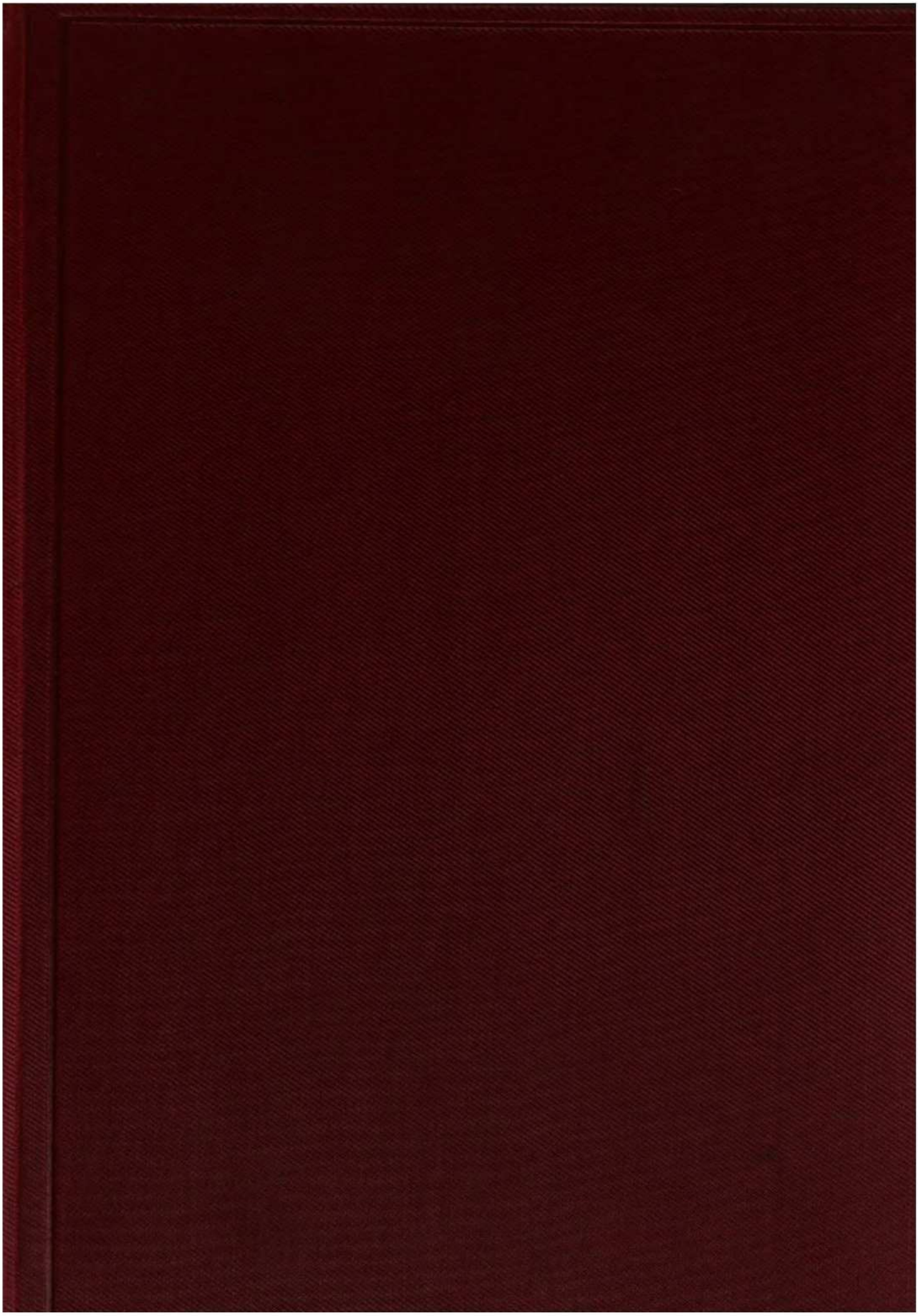

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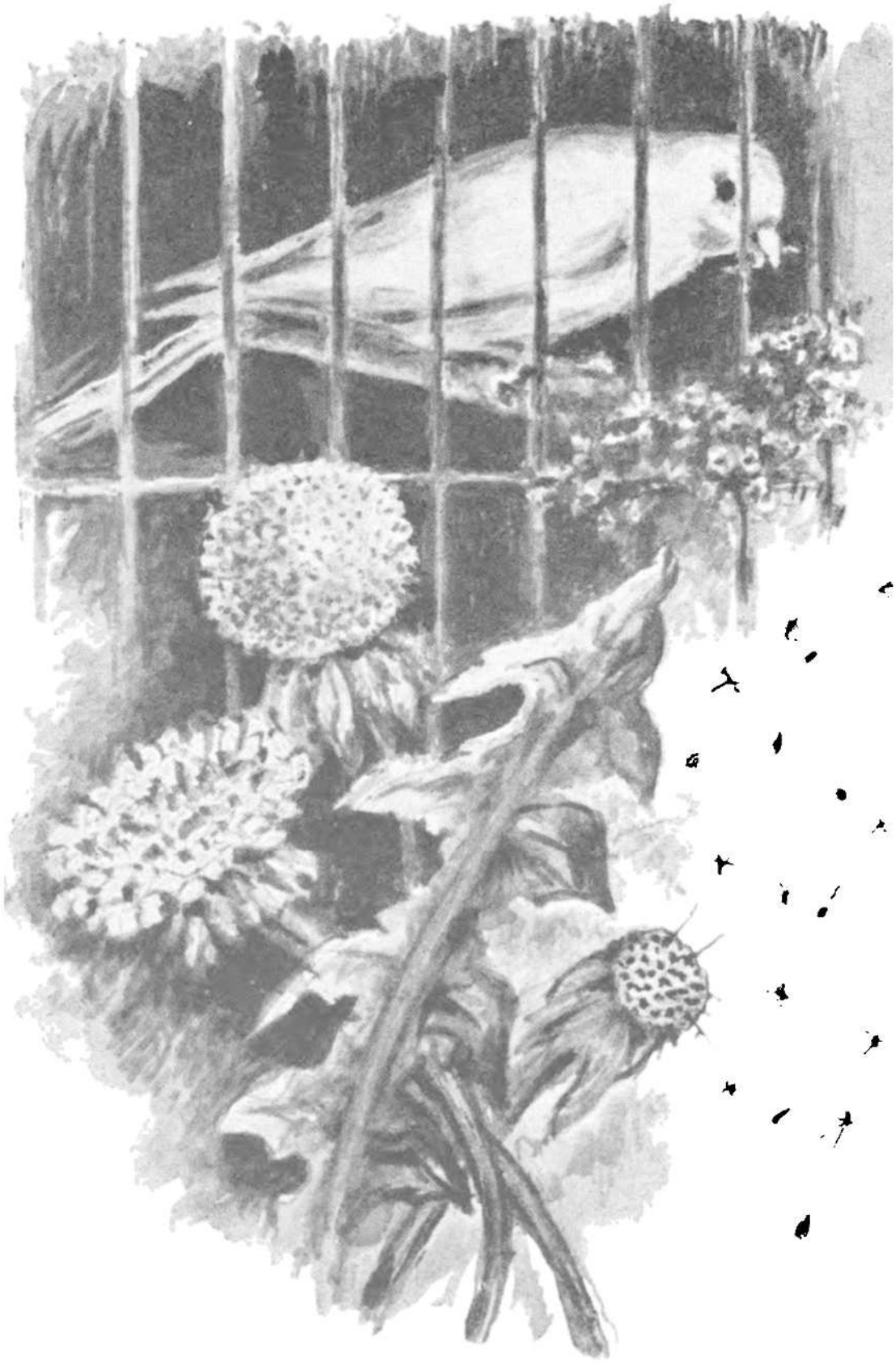

SELAH AND THE DANDELIONS

(*Page 48*)

ECHOES FROM "THE MORNING WATCH"

CHILDREN'S ADDRESSES

BY THE LATE

Rev. J. P. STRUTHERS, M.A.

GREENOCK

AUTHOR OF "STORIES TWICE TOLD," "PILGRIM CHEER," "THE WORD AND THE ROAD," ETC.

WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS ON ART PAPER

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"Watch ye, therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning.

"And what I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch.*"

MARK xiii. 35, 37

Preface

THE following pages contain a second series of articles taken from the *Morning Watch*. As its twenty-seven volumes have been out of print for many years, it will be easily understood that references made to what appear to be current events point to such things as happened in the years 1888-1914.

The first series under the title of *Stories Twice Told* has met with a very kind reception. Along with thanks received, hopes and regrets have been expressed: hopes that a second volume may follow, and regrets that some favourite story, remembered from childhood, had been sought for in vain in its pages. May such be found among these *Echoes*.

Every page of the *Morning Watch* was written with one end in view, that of helping men, women and little children to know the Love of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and we shall count ourselves happy if the reproduction of some of its messages will further that purpose in spreading the glad news.

A. L. S.

GREENOCK,
1925.

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The Forgotten Sheaf

The sheaves of wheat, as they leaned on one another in loving embrace, in the stooks that stood in golden rows, were very full of joy one glorious autumn afternoon. Each stalk of grain had been looking forward, at once with hope and fear, to that harvest day. For many a long week the seed had lain as it were in the grave, in the cold and dark, cast out of the land of the living. Then it seemed to rot, as though it would become a thing of shame. And yet it was only its covering, its garment, that rotted away, and even that only when it had served its purpose. Then came the sense of life and the desire to live, and the seed pushed upwards and downwards with all its might.

And what a great day that was when the little green blade thrust its head into the open air and saw the sun and sky! But that was a short-lived joy, for when a few hours were past, the sun disappeared, and all was dark again, and the rain fell and the chilly winds blew, and the poor little plant wished it could creep back under the ground. With the morning its courage revived, and with the second night it fell again. A whole week had passed before it knew that night and day were the ordinance of God. Yet, as the stalk grew, one trial followed another. There were dry east winds and bitter rains, fierce heats and nipping frosts. There were rumours abroad of worms and flies, mildew and rust. The stalks had survived through all, and

with the summer days came strength and beauty. Each plant took notice of its neighbour's loveliness, and could scarce believe its ears—and they were rich in ears—when it heard of the splendour of its own rare colouring, the green, the touch of blue, the deepening yellow and golden red.

Then came one other trial to the field of corn, the last but not the least. When it was fully ripe, there came three days of rain. It looked as if all the pain and suffering and fear, the striving and the growing and the beauty, were to end in naught. But that fear passed away, for the rain clouds disappeared, and the sky was clear once more and a drying wind blew steadily.

Yet, I must say, a great awe fell on the stalks when they saw the reaping-machine and heard the rattle of its knives, and watched their fellows fall headlong in broad swathes. "Would the knives hurt much? Was it a painful thing to die?"

And now it was all past! The pain was over before it was felt, and the stalks had been gathered and lifted up and bound into sheaves by the strong and skilful arms of singing men and women. Now, as they stood gathered into stooks, shocks of corn fully ripe, they were filled with glad surprise and knew not what to say. They could do nothing but embrace. This was the joy of harvest.

And yet they knew they were only at the beginning of the work they had been sent into the world to do. The past was all preliminary. They were to become bread for the use of man, and how much that meant they could hardly even

guess. Stacking, threshing, grinding, baking, firing, eating—all these processes were to be gone through before they could fulfil their destiny.

When three days were passed the farmer and all his hands began to " lead," working each day as long as the light served. The fourth day saw the leading finished, and the fields cleared—all but one sheaf ! During the afternoon the farmer's little grandson, who had been running about all day, had fallen asleep, and one of the workers had taken a sheaf and laid it for a pillow for the little laddie, in a corner of the field where a hedge sheltered him from the sun. Waking after a time, he ran back amongst the workers, and rode in triumph on the top of the last load home. But the poor sheaf was left lying all alone, and utterly forgotten. It had been very proud at being singled out to make a pillow for the child ; now it paid dearly for the honour. It could see far off the tops of the stacks in the steading ; it could hear the merry-making of the harvest-home ; but there was no more that it could do. A little girl came on it by chance next day and tried to lift it, but became frightened and laid it down again. A minister, going home from visiting, looked at it for a moment, and, hardly knowing he had looked at it, passed on and went his way. And then the weather broke again.

The stalks of corn were greatly downcast, and talked far on into the night with one another. Next day was fair, and hope revived. The God Who had done so much for them would do still more ! He had delivered them in six troubles ; surely in the seventh no evil would

touch them. And so it was, but the answer to their prayers was not quite such as they had hoped for. Deliverance came to them by the mouth, aye, by the very jawbone, of an ass. There was an old woman who travelled that part of the country selling dishes. Her donkey had cost her twelve-and-threepence, with three cups and saucers, blue with gold edges, thrown into the bargain. Poor Neddy was very thin, his ribs so manifest and palpable that an engineer had called him a lattice girder. His mistress, noticing the sheaf, crept into the field and having fetched it out, put it in her cart. That night and next day Neddy had such a supper and breakfast as he had not had for long, and was so overjoyed that he lay four times down on his back, and rolled from side to side with his legs in the air, praising and blessing God. From that day his health and the fortunes of his mistress steadily improved. It was another kind of destiny the sheaf had hoped for, but it could hardly have had a better. To make a poor donkey happy is to do a fine work for God.

But that was not all. On the Friday of that week, the minister of whom I spoke, being in perplexity for a text for the Sabbath afternoon —he had read through two Gospels and four Epistles without finding one—had turned back to Deuteronomy, and there, lighting on the twenty-fourth chapter, a very beautiful one, read these words, "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and

for the widow : that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands." Then he remembered the sheaf he had seen lying in the field, and in one moment he saw he had got his text from God.

There were some people, of course, who didn't like the sermon. They didn't wish to like it, and they got their hearts' desire. But there were some others who got great good from it and were made better men and women. One man, a church-goer for forty years, was struck with the tenderness of God. He had a vague idea that Christ loved us, but he had always understood that God the Father, if He did not actually hate men, would have done so if His Son had not compelled Him to yield a little by offering to die for us. The thought that *God* loved the world, and *so* loved the world, was a great discovery to him, and made that day *the* day of his life. Another man in the congregation, whose favourite text was, " Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost," saw, for the first time, that meanness was as hateful to God as waste. And a third man, who read all the high-class magazines, and understood that the God of the Jews cared nothing for the heathen and thirsted only for their blood, had his eyes opened, too, and saw that all through the Old Testament the God of Israel was the Stranger's God. And a poor woman, whose husband was but four weeks dead, went home with her three little ones, upborne by the words—" for the fatherless." Another widow, anxious about her boy in London, felt glad at the thought that there was bread enough

and to spare in her Father's house. And still another, who was greatly put about because her memory was failing and she was always forgetting things, was cheered by the thought that God has uses even for our forgetfulness. And a shop-keeper, who had once lost a five-pound note when on a visit to Dundee, and had never ceased blaming his wife for not having discovered and mended the hole in his pocket, came home ashamed that afternoon, and told her—she was in ill-health and unable to go to church—that he had got some light on the money he had lost four years ago. For the minister had been saying that sometimes, when we lost things, it was only God That had borrowed them for some purpose we didn't know. The money in the fish's mouth was money, perhaps, that someone was annoyed at losing. Yet God had made the man lose it, because our Lord had to pay the tribute, and had no money of His own ; and the man would get a blessing for it, because he would have been only too glad to give it to our Lord if he had known that the Lord had need of it. "And what you and I should have done, good wife, was this—we should have prayed that God would let somebody find the money that needed it ; I did very wrong in blaming you, so now I forgive you."

Perhaps I have told you enough about that sermon, but let me tell you one thing more. There was a lad there that day, a new-comer to the town, who had given up going to church, and hadn't opened his Bible for months. I don't know what brought him there, except that it was

the doing of the Lord. Two things struck him. First, the fact that there were so many things in the Bible that were really *interesting*, that had something to do with one's daily life. And secondly, he saw a little boy of seven listening so attentively that he said, "There must be some good people in this church. I must come back again." And come back he did, not only on Sabbaths, but to the prayer meeting on Wednesdays as well. He began to read his Bible, too, and the Bible brought him to Christ. Years after, when he went to Calcutta, he told his new minister there about the text that first made him think about eternal things. And the minister there took to the text also, and preached a far abler sermon from it than the one I have told you about, and a ship captain who was there spoke about it afterwards in Melbourne, and I can't tell you how many sermons since then have been preached on "The Forgotten Sheaf."

It seems to me that, while none of the sheaves was forgotten before God, but prospered in the thing whereto He sent them, it was the forgotten sheaf that was remembered most. The others brought forth, some thirty, some sixty, but *it* brought forth an hundred-fold.

Sir Thomas Hardy, K.C.B.

Captain Hardy was the man to whom Lord Nelson was speaking when he was struck by a musket ball, fired by a Frenchman from the rigging of the *Redoubtable*, in the battle of Trafalgar, 21st October, 1806. "They have done for me at last, Hardy," said Nelson as he fell on deck, on the very spot where his secretary had been killed a short time before. "I hope not, Sir." "Yes, my backbone is shot through."

And when he lay dying down below, he cried, "Will no one bring Hardy to me? He must be killed; surely he must be destroyed." And amongst his last words were, "Kiss me, Hardy."

I wish to tell you about a strange thing that happened to him a hundred years ago. Hardy was then a lieutenant. He had joined the navy in 1781, when he was twelve years old, and after many adventures, had greatly distinguished himself by his brave defence of a ship which Nelson had captured from the Spaniards, and entrusted to his care. He was attacked by a squadron of the enemy, and though he was compelled to surrender, did so only after the ship had lost all her masts and had become unmanageable. He was taken prisoner, but a few days after was released in exchange for a Spanish officer. He rejoined Nelson on board the *Minerve* at Gibraltar, in February, 1797.

The *Minerve* had no sooner set sail than she was pursued by two Spanish line-of-battle ships.

The foremost of these speedily gained on the frigate, and Nelson prepared for action. "Before the Dons get hold of that bit of bunting," he said, as he looked up at his flag, "I will have a struggle with them, and sooner than give up the frigate, I'll run her ashore." Nelson and his officers then sat down to dinner, but just as a Colonel Drinkwater, who happened to be on board, was congratulating Hardy on being no longer a prisoner, there was a cry, "Man overboard!" The officers of the ship ran on deck; the Colonel, who tells the story, ran to the stern windows to see if anything could be observed of the poor man. The jollyboat, with Hardy and a party of sailors in it, was already being lowered into the water. A few seconds only had passed when the jollyboat was carried by the current, which runs strongly to the eastward through the Straits, far astern of the frigate, and away in the direction of the Spanish men-of-war. Of course, the first object was, if possible, to recover the fallen man, but he was never seen again.

Hardy made a signal to the effect that the man must be given up as lost. Hardy's own safety was now the question that was uppermost. He and his men were in a perilous position, and their danger was increasing every moment. They were pulling with might and main to get back to their ship, but the current was too strong for them. At this crisis, Nelson, casting an anxious look at their situation, cried out, "I'll not lose Hardy. Back the mizzen topsail." No sooner said than done. The frigate's progress was instantly retarded, and the current began to

carry her back towards the jollyboat. Hardy and his men, filled with new hope, redoubled their efforts. But the Spanish captain, puzzled at the unexpectedness of the manœuvre, and not knowing the cause of it, concluded that Nelson must have seen some British ships coming to his help, and fearing some trap, shortened sail, and was soon lost to sight.

Hardy and his men were then picked up, and four days afterwards had a share with their captain in the great victory off Cape St. Vincent. A few months afterwards, by a brilliant piece of daring, he captured a French brig in the bay of Santa Cruz, and as captain of her was one of the "band of brothers" who helped Nelson to win the battle of the Nile.

The Mouse-Trap

Mother Mouse was a widow. She had been five times married. Of her husbands one had been killed by a cat, and four had been caught in traps, one of them after they had been only two days married. Of her thirty-five children, twenty-seven had been caught in traps, as had also a hundred and seventy-three of her own brothers, sisters and first cousins. It was no wonder, therefore, that she was always talking to her children and friends about traps and the danger of going near them.

"Please don't begin about traps to-night again," they would say.

"I daresay," she would answer, "I speak about them too often, but can you blame me? Four of my husbands, twenty-seven of my children, a——"

"Oh yes, a hundred and seventy-three brothers, sisters, and first cousins, and several thousands of acquaintances. Do stop, dear mother; we know all about it, and this perpetual harping about traps is enough to drive one into them."

"But I wish you to promise never even to go near one. You don't know what a mother's heart is."

"Well, if we don't, it is not for want of telling. And we are not going to submit to this kind of thing any longer. We are not fools, and mice will die though there wasn't a trap in all the world. And no reduction of traps will do any good.

If a mouse wishes to go into one it will go three miles to find one. Besides, can you prove that a reduction in the number of traps anywhere has resulted in a corresponding lessening of the number of mice trapped?"

"Hear, hear!" said the other mice, after this great burst of reasoning. "Hear, hear! That's the point. We have said all along that that's the point. Give us facts—something to go on."

"Haven't I given you facts?" she said. "Four of my husbands——"

"Women can't reason," resumed the eldest son; "I'm going out. I have had enough of this talk."

The son who spoke thus to his mother was clever in some things, though not so marvellously clever as he thought. He was a good climber, thanks chiefly to his unusually scaly tail, and fond of practical jokes, so long as he himself played them. He seemed to take a special delight in teasing and fretting his mother. She was in failing health, and used to sit trembling at night listening for traps going off. Her nerves at last got into such a state that her voice shook when she spoke, and she would burst out crying without cause.

There were several kinds of traps in use in the property in which she lived. There was the bowl, turned upside down, with a little wet meal sticking to it, one side of the bowl resting on a halfpenny set up on end. When a mouse went under the bowl and touched the meal, the halfpenny would fall and the mouse be shut

up inside. Now the tricky mouse I have told you of would rub himself against the outside of the bowl and make it tumble, and then go home laughing to find his mother in tears. "It is fun to you, but no fun to me," she would say.

He got a lesson once. His favourite little sister was playing at hide-and-seek one night, and crept under the bowl, knowing that no one would look for her there. Her brother, who was annoyed at something his mother had said to him, said, as he passed, "I'll give the old lady a fright," and he pushed the bowl. The screams of his little sister told him too late what he had done.

That stopped his tricks for a week or two, but he soon forgot, or acted as if he had forgotten, the warning. One of the people in the property had got a new trap which caught four of his brothers and sisters in five days. Their mother redoubled her warnings and entreaties, to her eldest son's annoyance.

"I must stop this chatter," he said, and soon an opportunity, as he thought, came. He was near the trap one day, and finding the wire of one of its compartments sprung, he determined to put his head in and scream as if he were caught, and then when his mother came running out, he would withdraw his head and ask what she was wishing. So in he went and screamed and screamed, fainter and fainter, and then, giving one or two convulsive shivers, lay as if he were dead. He did it well, for he was a good mimic. But just as he was picturing to himself the state his mother would be in, and the laugh

he would have at her, a cat looked into the cupboard—a possibility he had overlooked—caught him, tossed him up and down for five minutes, and then gobbled him up!

The owner of the house was a drunkard, whose father was a drunkard too, and as he was putting on his boots to go out to the public-house for his last drink for the night—it was five minutes to closing-time—he looked at the mouse-trap and the cat, and said, "Aye, it's a queer thing that mice won't take a warning in spite of all the lessons they get!"

Influence

For God is not a God of confusion.—1 Cor. xiv. 33. (R.V.)

JOHNNIE REDSHAW was a nice laddie in many ways, and yet it was long before he got his first "place." He was ever applying for situations, but somehow or other someone always stepped in before him. His mother said it was because he had no "influence." "My boy has no one to speak for him, and, nowadays, unless you have someone to speak for you, you may try and try as much as you like, but it's of no use." Several men who had been on the point of engaging him gave another explanation. "You see," they said, "we always like to see a boy's mother before we take him on, we like a bird out of a good nest, and we were rather taken with that boy, but when we called on his mother and saw her untidy house and her slovenly ways, we felt we really could not take her boy into our place."

Let me give an example of the way she managed things. One wet night when Johnnie was getting ready for bed, he found that the loop of his boot-lace had gone into a knot. He had heard or read somewhere that one's mode of dealing with a knot is a sure test of character, and had set himself therefore resolutely to undo it. But his mother told him "never to mind," he could do it in the morning, it was time he was in bed. And so to bed he went.

About nine next morning his Sabbath School teacher called to say there was a shopkeeper, a very fine man, who needed a boy at once. He had just seen the notice in his window, but not a moment should be lost.

One of Johnnie's sisters set to at once to blacken his boots, and while she was hunting up and down for the polishing brush—a most provoking brush which was always going amissing—his mother began to try to undo the knot with a fork and ran the prong into her thumb. Presently the brush was found in the coal bunker and a dispute arose as to how in all the world it got there. The next cry was, "Where's the scissors?"—there was no time to be grammatical—aye, but some questions are more easily put than answered, and the knot like the Gordian one of ancient story had after all to be cut. And where were the new laces that were bought a week ago? "Maybe there's one in your father's good boots that will do," but there wasn't, and what was to be done? "Oh never mind, just put in a bit of string, and where's the piece of sticking-plaster that was lying on the parlour mantelpiece?" Johnnie's collar happily was found at the first search, but his tie had to be got from behind the chest of drawers, the stick of the kitchen window-screen being broken, and one of his sister's eyes almost knocked out, in the process. But at last Johnnie was despatched, only to find that another boy, the first that had come, had got the place—the very boy he had seen running down the street when he was at the window unfastening the screen which had

been awkwardly entangled in the cord that let down the window-blind.

After breakfast the members of the family went their several ways, Mrs. Redshaw herself going to call on an old neighbour in an adjoining street to tell her of Johnnie's bad luck again. "But you see," as I always tell him, "you are only a poor man's son, and you have no influence, and unless you have someone to speak for you nowadays you needn't try to get on. It's of no use."

Meantime some other things were happening. The boy who had got the situation had come back to tell the shopkeeper that a foreman engineer who had had his name on his list for four months had told his father there was an opening for one apprentice and his father had promised he would be at the works by ten o'clock. Just as he was speaking, Johnnie's teacher called to say that if the vacant situation he had seen advertised in the window was not yet filled up, he thought he knew a boy that would do.

"Well, sir, it was filled up, but it's vacant again, and if you can give me the boy's address I'll see to it at once, for I must get someone this forenoon."

When Mrs. Redshaw returned—and barely in time to get her husband's dinner ready—her neighbours told her a man had been calling who was needing a boy and he had gone up and down looking for her for more than twenty minutes, and had gone away saying he would have to get some other lad.

On the Sabbath after, Johnnie alone of the

family was at church. His father could not find one of his boots, and the sisters had hunted in vain, one for a lost glove, another for her brooch, a third for her big new hat-pin—she remembered she had laid it on the window-sill on Friday night, and it was pretty provoking that you couldn't lay a thing down in this house anywhere but it disappeared if you turned your head for a moment.

At night the sisters went out to look for the comet—no harm in that surely, they argued—but if one can't find a hat-pin that is only four feet away one need hardly look for a comet that is 40 million miles off that has ceased to be visible three weeks ago.

As his father and mother were discussing why the fire had gone out—they blamed the setting sun for it, but the explanation was simply this, they had forgotten to put coals on—Johnnie suddenly said, "Do you know what the minister said this afternoon? The text was in the Psalms, but some of the leaves were awanting in my Bible and I don't remember the exact words, but it was about promotion not coming from the north or the south, and he said that if we didn't get on we weren't to begin blaming and envying other people, but to see if the fault didn't lie at our own door, and if, after doing that, we did our very best and still didn't get on, we should feel that it was God's doing, and that it was done for a wise and good purpose, and that He was preparing for us something far better than what we had set our hearts on."

"Aye," said Mrs. Redshaw, "it's easy for him to say that, a man that has neither a wife nor a

family, and got every prize he ever tried for at College, and has a salary of a hundred pounds a year," forgetting that her own husband's wage of forty-two shillings a week came to more than that! "No, he is like every other minister, he doesn't know what he is talking about. It's influence that does everything nowadays, and if you haven't someone to speak for you, nothing else is of any use. But, pity me, there's the fire out again, and we have scarcely sticks enough in the house to do to-morrow morning!"

"But, mother, I would have got that place last week if I hadn't broken my lace; I don't see what the want of influence——"

"I think Johnnie's getting sleepy," said his father, "it's time he was in his bed, and I wonder what's keeping these lassies! I don't think we are doing right in letting them out that way on Sabbath nights. There's bad influence in the world as well as good, and I'm beginning to think, guidwife, that if our children are not getting on as well as they might, it may be because, because—I don't know exactly how to put it—but perhaps the reason is not that they have not good 'influence,' but that their parents have not 'a' good influence."

How great a difference that one little "a" makes. Here certainly, at least, it justifies its claim to be first letter of the alphabet.

Our Temptations

MANY years ago I used to meet now and again on a country road a boy who was subject at times to some kind of fit. His companions at school had teased him so much that he could be kept there safely no longer. He was sturdily built and excessively strong, and the doctors thought it might do him good, mentally and physically, if he were set for a time to outdoor labour. He used to go accordingly to a public work belonging to one of his relatives, and there he toiled for several hours every day, trundling his barrow with the rest of the men. His prodigious strength, and his willingness to do anything that he was asked, equally astonished them, and some of them with a shameful thoughtlessness, if not a cruel deliberation, used to try, as they said, " to break him down," by giving him the heaviest possible loads to wheel. And the poor creature never said a word.

One afternoon, as he was going home early, he joined himself to me on the road, and we fell a-talking. He told me he said his prayers to Jesus every morning and every evening.

" And what do you pray for ? " I asked.

" I ask Him to make me good, and to bless all my friends."

" And do you not pray for anything else ? "

" Aye."

" Are you willing to tell me what else ? "

"Aye. I ask Him to keep the men from loading my barrow so heavy."

Sometimes as we grow old we think the burden that is laid on us is more than we can stand, and it certainly would be if Satan had his will. But God watches him, and God is faithful—faithful to His knowledge of our frailty, faithful to His sense of infinite justice, faithful to His character and history in time past, and faithful to His promise, and He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. And further, with every trial there is made *also the way of escape*. Just as when one buys a lock one gets the key that opens it, so the trial and the way of escape fit each other and are joined together by God.

The Fox that Showed no Mercy

VULPIE was one of the cleverest foxes in Fifeshire, but he was, without doubt, the cruellest and most selfish ; and never happier than when telling other foxes some mean trick he had played. So low-minded was he that, rather than have no story of wickedness to tell, he would make up one. Nobody ever knew how much of what he said was false, and how much was true, but certainly he was capable of anything, and " did what he could."

" You know the big dyke on Baillie's farm ? " he would say. " Well, I was basking in the sun, after eating a young pheasant, when a partridge flew past within a foot of my nose. He was bleeding badly, and had flown four hundred yards after being hit. He dropped about two yards off, completely done, but evidently pleased that they had shot him and not his wife or any of his children. So I just jumped down and gobbled him up."

Here is another of his stories. " Did you see an old woman on the road, much bent, a staff in her hand ? They say she's over one thousand months old, and very poor. One day I found out where one of her hens had its nest in the wood. There were only five eggs in it, but each egg had two yolks ; very sweet. I saw the old body searching the bushes, so I went down by the Rankeilour pond. Lo and behold, there were four wild ducks swimming near the reeds, two

old ones, and two young ones ! There was a bit of loose turf on the bank where they couldn't see me. I took it in my mouth, slipped into the water, and swam slowly down. You should have seen the young duck's face when I gripped it ! It put me in mind of the hare I got in the clover near Ramornie once. I was limping along pretending to be eating grass. It didn't see me distinctly. There was a breeze blowing towards me, and the clover was very high. Thinking I was its mother it cried out, " Nice eating, mamma." " First rate," I said, " you're the plumpest little hare I 've eaten this year."

Vulpie's last exploit was his seizure of Mrs. Bethune's big black hen. She was a young widow with three children. Her husband and she had saved £30 and lent it to a farmer. When her husband died, the farmer affirmed he had repaid the money long ago, and as he was a member of the School Board and a chief Free-mason, and she was only a widow and couldn't prove the debt, he had it all his own way, and she had to work in the fields. Vulpie saw her leave her house, and then crept along the hedge. There was the hen, with twelve lovely chickens two days old, six of them pure white. " She had barely time to give a scream, when I bounced in, seized her by the neck, threw her body over my shoulder, and was off. I was only sorry I couldn't get one of the chickens, too, but the chickens will keep ! "

" Well, Vulpie," said an old fox, " I've told you before, and I tell you again, that you will yet be sorry for every needlessly cruel thing that you

have done. We foxes have our own enemies, and should show mercy as we hope to get mercy. Every one of these things you brag about will stare you one day in the face; maybe sooner than you think. Our holes are all stopped, the hunt is to be out to-morrow, and you should——"

"All right!" said Vulpie, "the moon's up and there's no time for sermons; I'm off."

Next day the hunt had the last and best run of the season, and Vulpie was the cause of it. The hounds nearly had him at Baillie's dyke, but somehow he tricked them, and would have got off altogether had he not suddenly come across the old woman with the bent back, who was crossing a stile to visit a sick neighbour. This made him turn back, and the hounds came on his scent again. Off he made for the Rankeilour pond, and, swimming across, got into the wood. Once more I think he would have escaped, but the screaming of a bird directed the huntsman, and off Vulpie had to go again. This was the final burst, and lasted twenty minutes. It was long remembered as the occasion on which the big farmer—he had been at a Freemason meeting the night before—broke his leg. Vulpie, as he ran, had his own thoughts. Every field he crossed reminded him of some wickedness that he had done, and not the least bitter of his moments was the last, when, as the foremost of the hounds sprang on him in Mrs. Bethune's garden, the words he had uttered the night before flashed into his mind—"*The chickens will keep.*"

Johnnie Runciman and the Eclipse

JOHNNIE RUNCIMAN was the only son of his mother, a widow who did washing and dressing and mangling, or rather was willing to do them if only she could have got the chance. "It is about as difficult to get washing as it is to get into the Cabinet." So says a great writer, and Mrs. Runciman had found that specially true these past years. She lives in a little village on the Clyde, but the people who knew her husband and the brave struggle of her early widowhood are mostly all away from the place, and the strangers who come in the summer prefer the big laundries. One or two who have patronized her have forgotten to pay her. *Forgot* is the word they would use if they were challenged, but it is not the word God would use.

* * * *

Johnnie had been greatly taken with an illustrated article on the August eclipse, in a newspaper that came wrapped round some shirts. It had very fearsome-looking diagrams showing the path of the eclipse across the earth from Labrador to Arabia, and telling how eclipses came about. There were stories, too, about their effect on birds and beasts and flowers, and the awesome spectacle of some shadow that comes rushing at the rate of thousands of miles an hour. He read it all over to his mother at night, and got

from her her own reminiscences of what she had seen and heard about eclipses. The chief thing she remembered was hearing her own mother describe her grief as a child, away back in the 'fifties of last century, at watching the bigger ones at school looking through pieces of smoked glass and asking in vain to be allowed one peep.

The next morning Johnnie told the boys and girls with whom he played what he had been reading and hearing, and how the sun and moon and earth played as it were at "cross-tig," and smoked glass was the thing to see it with, unless they wanted to be blinded. Then they set out gathering bits of glass, and next day they kindled a little fire on the shore, and the more it smoked were for once the better pleased. More than one hand, too, was cut, but that only made them what Sir David Brewster called *Martyrs of Science*, astronomers suffering at the stake. And so, all ready, they waited for the great day.

* * * *

Early on Wednesday morning two men rowed ashore from the *Heron*, a steam yacht of 225 tons that had anchored overnight in the bay. The *Heron* belonged to the M'Dhu of M'Dhu. Englishmen laugh when they hear the name, but that only shows their ignorance. The M'Dhus, be it known, had no less than two male and two female ancestors in Noah's Ark! Yet, after all, the M'Dhus are only human, and the two sailors had come ashore with a big washing to be done, but who was to do it? For

the yacht, after receiving some guests, was to be off again by seven o'clock at night. A policeman happily directed them to Mrs. Runciman's. " We are overrun here," he said, " with vans and carts from all the laundries in the kingdom, and they have even started motor-cars for them, taking the bread out of poor women's mouths, but there will be no vans to-day, seeing it's Wednesday, and Mrs. Runciman is a decent, obliging woman, and she has a hard struggle. She'll never manage all that washing in one day, and nobody could expect it, but I'm sure she'll do what she can, and see that you pay her not only the public laundry prices but something extra for the obligement."

* * * *

When the eclipse was beginning about half-past eleven, Lady Margaret M'Dhu, driving along the shore with two of her guests, an Englishman and his wife, was a little amused at finding a group of four-and-twenty boys and girls with black bits of glass in their hands, standing on a little mound, gazing up into heaven. They could have seen the eclipse from their own back doors, or from any place where the sun was visible, but they felt instinctively that such a sight should be looked at from as worthy a stance as possible. The lady, who had meant to bring dark-coloured spectacles and had forgotten them, asked permission to look through one of the bits of glass, and, having passed it to her guests in turn, was handing it back to one

of the boys, when a girl said, "Will we no gie the coachman a keek through?"

"An English girl," said the gentleman smiling, "would have said *shall* instead of *will*."

"Yes," said his wife, "if she had had the grace to say anything so kind, but now, my dear, you must give them something. They will expect it."

"Here, my boy," said he accordingly, "here's two shillings to divide amongst you."

"No, thank you, sir," said the boy, "our teacher says we are not to take money that way from visitors."

"Is that so?" he said, turning to the little girl who stood nearest him.

"Yes, sir," was her answer, "we are not to be beggars," and then added—but she blushed after saying it—"we are astronomers."

"And who told you about the eclipse?" said Lady Margaret, very proud of her countrymen.

"Please, ma'am," shouted a dozen voices, "it was Johnnie Runciman."

"And which of you is he?"

"Please, ma'am, he's no here."

"And where is he?"

"He's helping his mother wi' a big washing."

* * * *

And indeed that was what he was doing. For when his mother saw the washing, she said, "I hardly think I can manage it. But I'm willing

to do as much of it as I can. What have you there ? "

" Twelve sheets, six table-cloths, two dozen pillow-slips, two dozen towels, and six dozen table-napkins."

" And they must be ready by six o'clock ? "

" Six o'clock at the very latest."

" I'll see, but I doubt it. The sun's shining, and it's dry looking, and there's a fine wind, and I would like to try, but you'll have to stay in, Johnnie, and help me."

Poor Johnnie did stay in, but with a sore heart, for, according to the paper, there was not to be another good eclipse till 1912. Still he hoped he might manage it somehow; but when a little girl called at nine o'clock to ask if he had any smoked glass to spare, for she had broken the bit she had and couldn't get another, he handed her his own, and felt that now for him at least the eclipse was as good as over.

It would take a cleverer person than I am, a washerwoman to wit, to describe how Mrs. Runciman worked that day. She did the napkins and small things first, to get them out of the way, and partly because Johnnie could be trusted to mangle them. But it was as much as he could do, poor little man, for the mangle was one of those heavy old wooden ones filled with stones, well enough balanced, but still pretty hard for a boy of eleven to work.

When it was half-past twelve and he knew the eclipse must be about its best, his back and arms were very weary, but his heart was sore. And then he made a great discovery. He had run out

for a moment or two, as indeed had his mother also, to look at the sun, but the glare dazzled them, and they could see nothing. But as he "caa'ed" the mangle he happened to look into a tub of water between him and the window, and in it he could see the reflection of the eclipse as plain as anything. He could look at it and do his work, too.

"Oh, mother, mother, look! Look!" he cried, and I don't know which of the two was the happier. The water had as it were been turned into something better than wine!

* * * *

As the afternoon wore on, and Mrs. Runciman was afraid she was going to be beat, some of the neighbours a little way off noticed that the policeman paid her three visits, and stayed nearly ten minutes each time, and looked very hot when he came out. "He has evidently been sent to speak to her about that mangle of hers, and no wonder, for it's liker a foundry than a laundry with that clamp-clamping noise it makes."

But the policeman was only helping Mrs. Runciman with the big table-cloths.

"Maybe I shouldna say it," he remarked when the last one had been put through, "but that's better than any of their steam machines could do it; it's the best mangling they ever got in their life."

* * * *

When the sailors came at half-past five, for

the yacht was to start earlier than had been expected, they were surprised to find everything done, and, as even they could see, splendidly done. The account, too, had been made out, written like copperplate by Johnnie—he was a little vain of his writing—and beautiful straight lines ruled with the back of a knife under the figures. It was dated, too, and receipted all correct.

* * * *

The papers next day were full of the eclipse, and as there were many visitors on board the yacht, there was a good deal of laughing over their hostess's experiences on shore.

At lunch—the sun was shining in through the open skylight in all his glory—one of the lady visitors said, "Excuse me, Lady Margaret, but I think that's the prettiest table-cloth I ever saw. How do you manage to get things done that way?"

"To tell the truth," was the answer, "I was admiring it myself! We got some things done yesterday in a great hurry. I must ask the steward to keep a note of the place."

* * * *

"Wonders will never cease," said Lady Margaret, an hour afterwards as she sat knitting on deck. You remember we heard that the boy who told the children about the eclipse was helping his mother with a big washing? Well, it turns out that it was the washing from our yacht! Here is the account:

30th August, 1905.

The Heron, to Mrs. Runciman.

12 sheets at 4d.	£0	4	0
6 table-cloths at 2½d.	0	1	3
24 pillowslips at 1d.	0	2	0
24 towels	0	1	6
72 table napkins at ¾d.	0	4	6
	£0	13	3

Paid.
With thanks,
Mrs. Runciman,
per J. Runciman.

"Isn't it beautifully written, too? There's my Torquil that has been at Eton two years, and he couldn't write like that if it were to save his life."

Lady Margaret found out, further, from one of the men how distressed Mrs. Runciman said her boy had been at missing the eclipse, and how he hadn't missed it after all. And she told the story at dinner, and the M'Dhu of M'Dhu—and he is a Highland Chief and not a man to be gainsaid—said "That boy deserves a present. What would you recommend?" he added, turning to a minister on board.

"I would send him Sir Robert Ball's book, *The Starry Heavens*. It's a handsome book, and as interesting as any novel. And I would put a text in it—'Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness,' or something like that."

"The book is a good idea, and we'll see about the text."

"You know," he added a little after, "there's a saying about a race that was won by a famous

horse 150 years ago or so—'Eclipse first, the rest nowhere.' I think I'll put this on the book :

'To the Boy
who put his Mother first
and Eclipse nowhere.'"

"But," said the minister, "will that not be teaching the boy to bet on horse-racing?"

"No fear," said the M'Dhu of M'Dhu, "the boy that has anything of the astronomer in him will never stoop so low as to have anything to do with betting."

* * * *

I don't know all that's going to come out of that day's washing, but Lady Margaret has some grand design in her head, and I shouldn't wonder if when the yacht returns to the bay in three weeks Mrs. Runciman is asked to go and be laundress at Castle Dhu.

How to Spend a Holiday

It was a long-looked-for Saturday in July, and it had come at last. The children had been afraid it might never come, or that it might come when they were not looking and slip past before they were aware of it. When I say the children, I mean specially the Baxters and the Falconers, who lived in the same street and went to the same school. The Baxter girls were getting new hats for the occasion, the describing of which to their envious schoolmates had taken up a good bit of the play time and almost all the school time for the previous two weeks. The Baxter boys forsook rounders and indulged in imaginary dives into the water, and showed all other boys —alike the willing and the unwilling—to listen how they were going to swim when that Saturday came. Mr. and Mrs. Baxter were very decent people, but with no gift of management. When the Friday came, no preparations had been made. They had not even settled where to go ; "they would see in the morning when they came down to the quay." It was half-past ten at night when the hats came, to the great relief of the almost distracted mother. The girls had fallen asleep in tears and were still asking pitifully for them in their dreams. The boys had been whipped for breaking a window with their new ball and sent off to bed.

The Falconers, on the other hand, had made everything ready. The baskets had been packed,

the bread wrapped in damp towels, the cold meat, the salt—everything was in its place. Their mother, unknown to them, had made a huge "dumpling" to surprise them with as the day went on. Then they had two big bottles cleaned and corked, all ready for filling at the dairy as they passed in the morning. Mr. Falconer had found out where the sandiest beach on the Clyde was, and had made spades which were spades indeed. Then they had worship, at which they asked God, if it were His will, to give them a good day, and having laid out coals and sticks for the morning's fire, they all lay down and slept. The boys in their excitement had a smart pillow-fight, which their parents laughed at, but the girls spent their last waking moments and some of their sleeping ones exhorting their dolls to be good. In the morning they rose hearty and fresh, put on clothes that would not spoil—only they had spotless white collars—and after a good breakfast, and worship—a little shorter perhaps than usual, but very earnest—set off in good time, got the milk on the way, and found themselves on the steamer with twelve minutes to spare.

Meantime the Baxters, after a hurried meal, had put on their new hats, two of them crying, having inadvertently nipped themselves with the new elastic. They had but one bottle of milk, with a cork made of newspaper, which they filled before leaving home. Some slices of bread and butter and jelly, and a pitcher to put whelks in, and six hard-boiled eggs—they forgot salt—completed their provision. One of the children had a red "tinnie," with a boy driving a hoop

on it, and the words—FOR A GOOD BOY. On the way two of the brothers quarrelled about the ball, and the one who was in the right got a slapping for it. When they reached the quay, their father, after telling that he had a good mind to go home, took them on board the first boat they came to. It had a bill up—"The whole way for 6d."

The Falconers were as happy as could be the whole way down the river. Their father persuaded one man to throw a bottle of whisky overboard, and got another to promise to come with his family to church next day. The children enjoyed everything they saw, cheering every boat they passed and well pleased to find that no boat passed theirs. But they liked best to watch the gulls and the pale green and white foam churned up by the paddles at every pier. They had one little shower, during which they crept under a tarpaulin on deck, and sang from under it like birds in a bush, "The boatie rows."

The Baxters meanwhile found themselves in the slowest boat and the dirtiest on all the Clyde. A little after they started, one of the boys by accident bounced his ball over the ship's side, and was made to sit down on the deck and keep quiet for the rest of the way. The mother spoilt her dress with tar, and beat the eldest girl for it, though the ostensible reason was her having let her sister's doll fall into a pail half full of water.

When they reached their destination and landed on the quay, the delight of the children knew no bounds. Their troubles were all forgotten. The boys were eager for stripping at once and swimming, but their mother quenched their

zeal by asking if they wished to be drowned. "Wait till we come to a nice sandy shallow place." So on they marched, but the shore became rockier and rockier, and at last in utter weariness they sat down and took out their bread and milk. But alas! the paper stopper had come out in the boat, and the milk that was left barely half filled the "tinnie." But the motto on it filled it to the brim with misery.

After a time each child was dipped in the salt water six times in rapid succession over the head, being allowed no time either to breathe or shut its eyes, and their cries were very pitiful. One of the girls, too, lost her hat, and her father, trying in vain to rescue it, slipped and skinned his elbow. And one of the boys lost a boot, and another could not find his collar. And there were no whelks, and the cockles were all full of mud. The hard-boiled eggs had not been boiled long enough, and four of them were broken. So the two and a half hours that were all their slow boat allowed ashore went quickly past in spite of their great misery. They got on board at the last moment and were consequently stormed at by the purser. Just before they reached Glasgow, one of the boys, who had been marvellously cheerful during the journey, incautiously produced a little crab, five-eighths of an inch long, that he had found and hidden in his pocket, and was ordered at once to throw it overboard. "And you'll catch it, my man, when you get home!" So with this pleasing prospect he and the others stepped ashore. The youngest was crying, being half asleep, and other two had toothache,

and the one who had lost his boot had cut his feet, and the girl who had lost her hat scratched her sister's face and then began to cry for sorrow at what she had done. And when they reached home the fire was out, and there were no sticks in the house.

Then their father looking round at them said, "Let me never hear any of you asking for a sail again, as long as I live."

Now, I am so sorry for the Baxters, and have spent so much time telling about their troubles, that I have no heart to say more than a few words about the Falconers. They had five hours on shore, and in that time the boys had two bathes, and the oldest one learnt to float on his back, by lying perfectly still, as straight and stiff as a poker, with his head thrown as far back as he could manage; and the next oldest actually swam three strokes. The young ones paddled about, and buried one another up to their knees in the sand; and the girls made houses and gardens with shells for little walls. Then they all built a huge fort with a deep moat round it, and tried to keep out the advancing tide, and cried with delight when the water swept it all away. A man with a boat, too, took them out in turns, and taught the boys to row; and they fished, and caught five flounders and three little whitings, and a very terrible-looking fish covered all over with jags, which they threw back into the water, the story of whose fearful appearance every friend of the family had to hear afterwards in full detail. And a woman, who had a cottage and had noticed the father asking a blessing on

the seashore, made them tea, and gave them a big bouquet of flowers, and allowed them to go with her own children to pull gooseberries. And then they came home as brown as berries, and after sharing their fish and their flowers with their next-door neighbour, quickly kindled the fire and made tea and had worship—at which two of the little ones fell asleep through weariness; and so to bed. It was hard work rising next morning, but the fresh water revived them, and the flounders were as sweet as could be. Then, as was most fitting, off to church, forenoon and afternoon; and when the minister read about Jonah and the big fish, the boys felt certain they knew all about it.

And on the Tuesday after, the good woman who had entertained them wrote, asking the children to come two by two to spend each of them a week at her house.

And the Baxters? Well, there's the doctor gone along to see them. That's the third visit he has paid in two days.

Selah and the Dandelions

SELAH is the name of our new five-months-old canary. We called him so chiefly because it is a Bible word, and one likes to join every member of one's household with oneself in the highest things as far as one can, to give them, in the touching words of Ezra, "if only for a little moment a nail in our God's holy place, and a little reviving in their bondage." We chose the name partly also because, like his prototypes, he had the curious habit of coming in with his sweet and gentle little note at the end of a verse now and again, in an irresponsible kind of way, when we were singing a psalm at family worship; and, further, we didn't quite know the meaning of what he said, or all that was involved in it. None but its Maker and our Father, and perhaps His and their Angels know the thoughts and feelings that are in the twitterings and songs and selahs of little birds, but doubtless He listens and remembers as they sing "with delectation."

But this I know, that Selah is a little gentleman. He gets, of course, the ordinary seeds and infallible mixtures that all canaries get, and perhaps, too, an undue supply of the weeds they love, the weeds one sees by every roadside and nestling at the foot of every wall. Our garden is singularly rich in these, and in all other things—thanks to Eve and Adam and, most of all, ourselves for that—that no garden ought to have. Our

dandelions, and chickweed, and groundsel are of the choicest brands and flavours, while our "rats'-tails" are the best the King's highway can produce. All these, with lettuces, our little Selah gets like the singers in the days of Zerubbabel and Nehemiah who got their portions "as every day required." But I have noticed this—he takes each blade or seed with equal thankfulness, just as it comes in turn, not picking this and that first, and then that which is worse. You know how cats do? They look at their milk, "new come in," and their porridge, and no matter how free of knots it be, they turn from it with disdainful eyes, and wander about querulously for an hour or two in the hope of getting fish; aye, vain hope!

But Selah, who has a soul above cats and all their ways, and desires nothing better than to be far away from them, sets to at once to his breakfast and lunch and dinner and tea and supper and whatever other names he has for his unceasing intermediate meals of herbs, whatever herb it be, with a contented, and more than a contented, a thankful, gladsome singing heart. Now if he chose one fruit rather than another, he knows that one might have to put oneself about to get some special kind; to go, for example, 200 yards for a rat's-tail in a day of wind and rain and extra-heavy work, when one could gather chickweed by the square foot in every row of vegetables and every bed of flowers one cultivates. Therefore I know he is a little gentleman, though some perhaps might say he is only taking a kind but clever way of reproving one, as if he were to

say, "Would it not be better to pluck out the thousand stalks of groundsel that are in that so-called garden of yours, than the single rat's-tail in that far-distant public thoroughfare? Faithful, I have heard you read, are the wounds of a friend; and I wouldn't like the world to know the state your garden's in!"

Some of you, at least, know that the dandelion is so named from the French dent-de-lion, because its leaves are very like lions' teeth. Well, one day lately when I was looking for something for Selah, I found a remarkably beautiful specimen of a dandelion's head—children used to call it "what's-o'clock"—and I may say with Samson—you know the story of course?—that out of the eater came forth meat, out of the strong came forth sweetness, for I got some lessons out of the lion's mouth.

A lesson about beauty to begin with. The first chance you get, take a good look at the round globe-shaped head with its silky whiteness and its many gleaming stars, and ask yourselves if you ever saw anything more beautiful. Then slowly take the little globe to pieces, and you may find over 200 lovely parachutes, with dark brown thickish ends which fit exactly into a thing like the top of a thimble crowded with little holes, or sockets, most exquisitely finished and arranged. The thick ends I have mentioned are the seeds, and the parachutes are for wafting them away whithersoever the wind listeth. In one of these parachute ends I have counted with the naked eye over fifty little threads as light as gossamers; how many threads may spring again

from these in turn only a microscope could show, and perhaps not even it. I think if you look for yourselves you will see in each of these big globes a little world of beauty.

Now, why does God spend so much wisdom, power, and love in making weeds? Perhaps He does it to make us see how fruitful the soil is and how eager the ground is to bring forth life of some kind or another. Perhaps He does it to compel us to delve and hoe and clean the ground more diligently than we do. But, further, we may be sure that in the plant itself there is something good, and very good, some quality beyond all those that skilful herbalists have already found. Where there is so much beauty there must be many gracious purposes and uses that as yet are undiscovered, unrevealed. Men have already found medicines in these plants, and made broths of them that have helped

" the chemic labour of the blood."

Fifty years hence, or ten, or five, wise men may find in these little rockets, " fledged as it were with Mercury's ankle-wing," sent up and then let down from heaven, ascending and descending angels, answers to great questions, and solutions of big difficulties, that have puzzled men for ages, and they will wonder why you and I did not see the marvels and the blessings that were lying to our hands and staring at us all the time.

John Henry

Born Friday, 3 May, 1661.
Died, 12 April, 1667.

When you grow up and are getting a house of your own, as I have told you before, you are to take fifteen or sixteen shillings out of the bank and buy Henry's Commentary—not Scott and Henry's, remember !—but *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* by Mr. Matthew Henry, "late Minister of the Gospel at Chester."

I wish to tell you about his eldest brother John.

There was great rejoicing at his birth, for he was the first-born, the son of many prayers, and a goodly child, "his complexion sweet and ruddy, and his eyes lively." His grandfather wished him to assume the name Matthews, instead of Henry, but his father properly refused, whereupon the old man took such offence that he never darkened his son-in-law's door to the day of his death !

There are many references to the little boy in his father the Rev. Philip Henry's *Diary*.

"3 July, 1661. The first day of my son John's putting on a coat. Clothe him, Lord, with grace, with righteousness, with Jesus Christ."

By September, 1662, "he had in a great measure obtained both his feet and tongue."

"3 May, 1663. This day my son John is two years old. Blessed be God for the mercy of this day two year to mother and child and me in them."

"10 April, 1665. The first day of my son John's going to school. He sets out upon a long journey, if he have life and capacity, wherein the Lord be his good speed. Amen!" His first teacher was a Mr. Samuel Catheral. By the end of the year he had learnt to read English.

"In January, 1666, I entered him at the public school, being yet in coats, which had never been known there before. Within three weeks his grandfather died, on which occasion he was put into breeches, being to put on mourning." "He began his *Accidence*," that is, the rudiments of grammar, and soon "dispatched it." "That spring he was dangerously ill of the chin-cough, and we gave him up to God, Who was pleased to lend him to us again."

"March 24, 1667, being Sabbath day, he sickened of the measles, attended with a fever."

"12 April. At sun-set this day he died, our first-born, and the beginning of our strength, a forward (that is, a clever) child, manly, loving, patient under correction. Have I over-boasted, over-loved, over-prized? Wherefore is it that Thou contendest, shew me, shew me."

"The Act of Parliament requiring all people to bury in woollen, he was wrapped in white flannen."

"He was remarkable for four things:

1. Forwardness in learning, having all three requisites, apprehension, judgment, memory, even beyond his age, and withal a great love to it, never seeking at any time to stay from school.

Præterquam ætatem nil puerile fuit, except in age there was nothing childish about him.

2. Tenderness of disposition, apt to melt into tears at the least show of displeasure, though but in a frown.

3. Patience under correction, which he had not often, because he did not often deserve it, and when he did, his penitence prevented it, if not altogether, yet in the severity of it. And this consideration taught me something by way of instance, in bearing the will of God in taking him from me.

4. Love to his brother and sisters. When Matthew sickened first he went to bed with him of his own accord, sooner than ordinary, and wept over him.

"He was of a strong, healthy constitution, not smaying for cold in school like other children, as his master told me. He was full of action, stirring, *and what he did, he did with all his might.*"

"His sickness quickly took away the use of his understanding; he talked much, most of his books and schoolfellows, and once repeated distinctly the fourth commandment. He had learnt without book and would rehearse often the following verses printed in Mr. White's book, *The Power of Godliness*—

Short was my life, the longer is my rest,
God takes them soonest whom He loveth best.
He that is born to-day and dies to-morrow
Loses some hours of joy but months of sorrow.
Other diseases often come to grieve us,
Death strikes but once, and that stroke doth relieve us.

My hope is, through the everlasting covenant of mercy, that I shall meet him again with comfort at the right hand of Jesus Christ at the last day." Mr. Henry should have remembered, however, that we don't need to wait to the "last day" to meet our friends. The souls of believers meet in Paradise the very day they pass away, according to our Lord's promise to the Dying Thief.

Mr. Henry never forgot his little boy, and in his Diary in after years we have such entries as these :

"This day was fourteen year about sun-set the Lord took my first-born son from me with a stroke. In the remembrance whereof my heart melted this evening. I begged pardon for the Jonah that raised that storm, and blessed the Lord that hath spared the rest. I begged mercy, mercy, for every one of them, and absolutely and unreservedly devoted and dedicated them, myself, my whole self, estate, interest, life, to the will and service of that God from whom I received all. Father, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come."

"3 May, 1678. If my son John had lived to this day, he had been seventeen years of age, but God prevented, yet I desire to be thankful I had such a son."

If the story of this little child's short life does any of you any good, it will add to his surprise and joy and glory, as well as to God's, at the last day. You will be a crown of rejoicing to him as well as to his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Weigh Thy Words

Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.—Eccl. vii. 10.

It was a Sabbath morning in April, and two men, Mr. Williams and Mr. Andrewson, were speaking to one another across the four-foot wall that separated their gardens. Breakfast and family worship in both their houses were past, and they were waiting till their wives and children were ready for church. It was a little after nine, but they had four miles to go.

Mr. Williams was a grumbling, discontented man, who thought he had nothing to learn from anybody, so he daily grew in conceit and ignorance.

"I suppose there never was a more anxious month than this in the country's history," he said.

"It is a solemn time," said Mr. Andrewson.

"I don't suppose there has ever been a time like it."

"A very solemn time, indeed."

"The most critical time our country ever saw," said Mr. Williams.

"A critical time, no doubt," said Mr. Andrewson, "and we do well to pray."

"In fact," said Mr. Williams, "I believe it is unquestionable that there has never been a month like it in either ancient or modern times in the whole world's history. That's what all the newspapers say, and what every intelligent

man that I have met says. There never has been a time like it in the experience of any people or nation."

"Are you remembering the 24th of August, 1572, in France?" said Mr. Andrewson.

"No, I can't say I do. What happened then?"

"That was the day of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. And do you know what happened on the 1st of May, 1545, in Spain? or in Russia on the 2nd of April, 1512? or in Peru in 1544? or in Guatemala in 1524? or in Afghanistan in 1725? or in Thibet in 1318? Do you know a single thing that happened in any part of Asia from the year 550 to the year 1100? or a single thing that happened in China for 2000 years before the Christian era, or 1000 years after?"

"Do you know yourself what happened on these dates in all these countries?" said Mr. Williams.

"Not in the very least," said Mr. Andrewson, "but until I know a little more of the world's history than I do I should hardly think myself justified in using such expressions as you do—'never in the history of any people,' and all that kind of talk."

"I'm only a plain man that knows his Bible and is content with that."

"Well, then, do you know what happened 2348 B.C.? or 538 B.C.?"

"No."

"Well, the one was the year of the Flood, and the other the date of the Fall of Babylon.

But you'll know, of course, what happened A.D. 70? No? It was then that Jerusalem was taken by the Romans, and at that time, our Lord says, 'There should be tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.'"

"Then I understand you to say," said Mr. Williams, "that this has not been a critical month in Britain's history?"

"Oh, no! I only said we should both know a little more before we said it was *the most critical* time in the history of the world either in ancient or modern times. Don't you see? I might say your cabbage plants are looking very well, but that's a different thing from saying there never were cabbages like them since the world was created."

"Nobody was speaking about cabbages," said Mr. Williams.

"Quite true," said Mr. Andrewson. "I was only——" But then he suddenly remembered the text—Prov. 27. 22, "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him"—and wisely said no more!

Sir Richard Grenville

SIR RICHARD GRENVILLE died in 1591. An English fleet, under Lord Howard, had been sent to the Azores to look out for the homeward-bound treasure fleet of Spain. Grenville, who was second in command, was on board the *Revenge*, a ship of 500 tons, which had carried Sir Francis Drake's flag against the Armada in 1588. Suddenly fifty-three Spanish ships appeared, of which at least twenty were men-of-war. Lord Howard, being greatly outnumbered, gave the signal to his fleet to weigh anchor and escape as best they might. Eleven ships obeyed the signal, but, for some cause or other the *Revenge* was unable for the moment to follow. She had a crew of 190, ninety of whom were sick on shore. Sir Richard Grenville first saw them brought on board and stowed away under deck, then weighed anchor, and, contrary to prudence and all good seamanship, went straight for the Spanish squadrons. Their huge ships, each twice as large as his own, took the wind out of his sails, and tried to board him. All that afternoon, and all that night, till daybreak, for fifteen hours, he held out against the furious cannonade of the enemy's artillerymen and musketeers. Before morning fifteen huge galleons had assailed him in turn by twos and threes, and all in vain. Some were sunk and the rest were almost willing to make a truce. But as the day dawned the helpless state of the *Revenge* was but too clearly

seen. Her powder was all spent, her pikes were all broken, the masts were lying over the side, the upper works were all shot in pieces, and scarcely thirty of her crew were left alive, and most of those grievously wounded. Sir Richard himself was amongst the dying, having been shot through the body, and again in the head. "The *Revenge* was settling slowly in the sea; the vast fleet of Spaniards lying round her in a ring, like dogs round a dying lion, and wary of approaching him in his last agony." Her captain, seeing all hope gone, then gave the command:

> "Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her in twain!
> Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain!"

The gunner consented, but the others, feeling they had dared and done enough, determined, without consulting their dying commander, to surrender if honourable terms could be got. The Spaniards treated them with great courtesy, and a boat was sent to bring Sir Richard on board. "They might do with his body as they listed, he said, for that he esteemed it not." As they carried him out of his ship, he swooned, but reviving asked the company to pray for him.

In a few hours, feeling death near, he spake these words in Spanish: "Here die I, Richard Grenville, with a joyful and quiet mind, for that I have ended my life as a true soldier ought to do that hath fought for his country, queen, religion, and honour. Whereby my soul most joyfully departeth out of this body, and shall always leave

behind it an everlasting fame of a valiant and true soldier that hath done his duty as he was bound to do."

"All England, and all the world," says Mr. Froude, "rang with the story. It struck a deeper terror, though it was but the action of a single ship, into the hearts of the Spanish people, it dealt a more deadly blow upon their fame and moral strength, than the destruction of the Armada itself."

Immediately after the battle, a fleet of merchantmen joined the Spaniards, forming in all 140 sail. Then came a terrible tempest, and, of the 140, only 32 ever saw Spain. And amongst the lost was the *Revenge* herself and her Spanish prize crew of 200 men.

The Nestless Trees

The trees of the field shall clap their hands.—Isaiah lv. 12.

It seemed to be always blowing in what we called the gully, and perhaps that was why no birds ever built their nests in either of the trees that stood there. The one was a Horse-chestnut and the other a Lime, and many a time, as they twined their arms and put their heads together, they condoled with one another on that account. Only a hundred yards away there was a clump of elms with a rookery of never less than two hundred nests, and even the scraggy little hawthorn tree on the other side of the road had always a nest or two of singing birds. Forty years now the Chestnut and the Lime had lived in hope, but though now and again a pair of birds would come and look around and say, "These are nice trees, but—" they never said as human beings would have done, "Perhaps we may call again," for it was not etiquette amongst the birds to tell lies, and they never did call again. "And oh it would be so sweet," the two trees would say, "to be rocking the little birds asleep, and to feel their funny tiny claws holding tight on to us as they balanced themselves in fledging time, and to watch their mothers coming and going and teaching them how to aeroplane." (*Aeroplane* was the fashionable word for *fly* amongst the crows that year.)

* * * *

Another spring had come, and the two trees

sprouted their very best, still hoping against hope. But they said nothing to each other, though each knew what the other was thinking of. They were like a mother whose son has been answering advertisements of vacant situations for months. For a time the two talk about nothing but the post, and the next post, and the last post, and to-morrow morning's post at 7, or the second one at 9 ; but after a while, though they still keep on writing applications, they cease to look for answers, and say nothing, though they sigh inwardly. Another spring and no birds ! but, worse than no birds, came men with ladders and ropes and axes and saws, and almost before the trees had time to know what was a-doing, they and their branches were cracking and crashing and falling down. And never once in all these forty years had they sheltered a single nest ; and now hope was gone, and gone for ever. It had been such a lovely morning, too, such genial sunshine, and no breath of wind, and lover birds were all a-foot, and all a-wing, and all a-mating, and the trees had had a kind of pre-monition. Something was going to happen ; perhaps the birds were coming to them at last.

* * * *

And the birds did come, but not in the way they looked for. There are fashions amongst feathered bipeds as well as amongst unfeathered ones, and this year it suddenly began to be known in Crowland that no crow's drawing-room suite, or kitchen furniture—for the two things meant the same—was complete without a chestnut

sideboard, that is a dresser. A sideboard cannot be made of less than five pieces, and that provided for a thousand chestnut shoots and twigs, and the shoots and twigs were very glad, though it seemed almost too good to be true.

The Lime was glad, too, and tried to clap its hands, as it lay on the ground, but oh how feebly it could do it, as compared with the days when it waved and swung and tossed its arms in the wind! Still it was glad for its comrade's sake. Perhaps it too might——but no! For presently some gardeners came and took away all its brushwood to make pea-stakes of, and pea-pods were very good to have, but singing birds would have been better. But there could be no birds now.

And yet birds there were! For when the brushwood was stacked and piled in several of the gardens round about, the blackbirds came and claimed them as their own, and built, and laid their eggs, and hatched their young and gave them their first lessons in whistling, and taught them how to fly, and all this was done before the gardeners needed the pea-stakes. Then summer came, and the children and the maids came out with little baskets every day, and sang, and laughed, and talked, as they pulled and shelled the peas, and the Lime shoots clapped their hands once more, and said, "This is better than we ever dreamed of. We have had a double blessing, and the last more than the first, for the children are worth many sparrows! And when the peas are over, we shall be laid aside and kept for another spring, and next year shall be as this, perhaps much more abundant."

Commendation

For I ought to have been commended of you.—2 Cor. xii. 11.

One evening some years ago I came across an old man working in his garden. He looked annoyed, and little wonder. A young apple tree that he had tended for five years had blossomed for the first time a few days before, and some boys had not only stolen all the "flourish" but had broken several of the strongest shoots. And he had been hoping to have one apple apiece for the grandchildren that were to visit him in autumn!

"It's strange," he said, "how much trouble folks have with their gardens, and have always had!" And I could see, as he stood up and straightened himself for a little, that he had been caught away back to Paradise, the Paradise that was lost. "Aye," he said, "it's true: 'cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.'" There's a terrible lot of happiness about a garden, but there's a lot of trouble too.

"I mind," he added after a little, "the day I did my first real bit of garden work, and I have never forgotten the sore heart I had at the end of it. Like the rest of our neighbours we had a strip of ground about, say, 30 yards long and 12 or 13 broad, and my father was to begin his delving for the season one Saturday after he came home from his work at 2 o'clock. Men worked

60 hours a week in these days, and the conscientious ones amongst them often threw ten or fifteen minutes in extra at night if there was anything particular about the piece of work they were at when half-past six came, though they neither expected nor got thanks from their masters.

"I would be between eight and nine years old at the time, and someone had given me a spade—not the little wooden kind of thing that you see children digging with in the sand, but a real genuine one—not a big one, of course, but one with an iron blade and a sharp edge. Saturday was the one day in the week that we got a fine long play on, provided our 'counts' and parsing for Monday were done and any messages our mother needed gone for. After 10 o'clock, when breakfast and family worship were over and my father had gone off to his work, two or three boys that I knew came to the door to ask if Jamie —that was me—was coming out to play. To my astonishment and sorrow my mother said, 'Not just now.' I put no questions to her, of course, but after a little she said, 'Now that you have got a fine spade, I think it would be nice if you did a little bit of delving this forenoon, and you could get out to play afterwards. It would help your father, for he is very tired on Saturdays, and I am sure it would please him. Old Mr. Stevens is beginning his delving, I see, and you should just copy him, and come in when you have done five or six rows.'

"So out I went, and as Mr. Stevens's garden lay ahead of ours to the south, and he had his

back to me, it was easy for me to see all he did. He was a very particular old man, retired from work, and about the neatest and tidiest man there ever was. I never saw him speak to anybody, and he certainly didn't speak to me that day. But I watched him and copied him all the same. When he delved I delved. When he scraped his boots on his spade I scraped mine. When he mopped his brow with his buff and blue silk handkerchief, I mopped mine with my little red cotton one. If he stood and looked along his line I stood and looked along mine ; or if he halted for a little with his arms like this—I think they call it akimbo, though I have always thought that a very funny word—I did the same. I heard years afterwards that several of the neighbours stood at their windows that day watching me and laughing. Of course I couldn't keep up with Mr. Stevens, for there's a great difference between a big spade and a little one, and a bigger difference between a grown man and a boy. But I did my best and got so keen in my work that I held on till two, when my mother opened the window and called me in, just in time to wash and be ready for dinner.

" Of course neither my mother nor I told my father what I had been doing, but when he took his spade out of the cellar and went out to the garden about three, I went with him. I can't remember now how much I had delved, but I thought it looked well, and I watched his face to catch the look of astonishment and delight that would come over it the moment he saw what and how much and how well I had done, and I

was already blushing all over at the thought of what he was sure to say.

"But when I saw him walk down our plot and trample through the bit I had done and begin to delve at the very beginning without saying one single word or giving even a look of any kind, it was all I could do to keep from crying. I have never forgotten the disappointment I felt.

"I never knew why he said nothing, but I know now, and have known ever since I grew up, that fathers and mothers have often things to try them that they do not tell their children because they do not want to grieve them, and cannot tell them because their children could not understand them. By delving without first asking his permission I may have spoilt some plan he had set his mind on, or perhaps he was not well, or had heard bad news about short time or smaller wages ; I never knew. He said neither good nor bad either then or afterwards. But though, as I stood and watched him delving deep and delving neatly where I had dug shallow and untidily, all conceit in my work soon disappeared, I still thought he might and should have said one little word of commendation. It may be that his heart was too full to speak, and that he was really blessing God for making his little boy so ready to give up four hours of play for four hours of work. But one word of praise would have been so sweet ! It is not for me to judge him ; but rather to condemn myself for sinning the same way to others and for forgetting the lesson I should have learnt that day."

The best fathers on earth sometimes provoke

their children to wrath, and sometimes to needless sorrow. They blame us, and punish us, now and again unjustly or too severely, or they withhold the word of commendation that is due. But it is never so with God. Our Father in Heaven not only knows our frame, and how weak and frail we are, but He understands our thought afar off, and where men see only the blunder we have made, He sees the love, and nothing but the love, that lay at the bottom of our mistake, and all that may have been amiss in what we did He turns to good and makes it to fulfil some high and new and unexpected purpose. For as Jesus sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious ; and she brake the box and poured it on His head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made ? And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone ; why trouble ye her ? She hath wrought a good work on Me. She hath done what she could. That is to say, as a great living scholar and divine has put it, " Jesus justified her, not by reducing her act to smaller proportions, but by revealing it in all its depth and height, and showing that it was greater than she herself knew." She hath done what she could ; she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

God likes to say " Well done ! "

The Ambitious Coot

The coots lived in a little corner of a loch in the south of Scotland, near the sea. There were six children, two girls and four boys, and they were happy and contented, all but one. He was the second youngest brother. I don't know how it was, but, strange to say, his grandmother had the same failing. From her infancy she found fault with everything. So with him. He was a pretty child, with a lovely orange-scarlet spot on his head, but, as he grew up, the bright colours disappeared, and gave place to the bald patch that all coots have. He became, in fact, quite an ordinary bird, and that seemed to vex him. Twice or thrice he ran from home, and once was actually five hours away. His parents were in great distress; no coot before had been known to go anywhere, even for half an hour, without asking leave. His father gave him a right good pecking, and then his mother took him apart and reasoned with him. He was very insolent, and told her he wished he had been born a duck, a mallard, with brilliant plumage. "Oh, it's dreadful," he said, "to be nothing but a poor, sooty-looking coot."

"Like your father and me?" his mother said. She never forgot the tone with which he uttered these words—"a poor, sooty-looking coot." She felt that her boy was estranged from her. Yet they had many talks together after that. One I remember especially. He was speaking

about the superiority of the duck family. "Why, Mother," he said, "even human beings, whom we are told so often to look up to, hold the ducks in honour and call themselves after them. One of the bravest of English seamen was named Sir Francis Drake. Surely that proves what I say."

"If that has been distressing you, my child," she answered, "it is a pity. For one of the bravest of English soldiers, a man who helped to conquer India and drive the French from it, was named after our family—Sir Eyre Coote!"

The older he grew, his absences from home became longer and more frequent. He loved nothing so much as swimming as near the wild ducks as he could get. One of them, called Lord Greensleeves, from the beauty of his coat, addressed a casual word to him one day in a sudden strange fit of condescension. From that hour young Coot was "neither to hold nor to bind." He could talk and think of nothing else. His devotion to his patron became ridiculous. One morning, for instance, he was hurrying away before breakfast was over.

"Sit down, please," his father said, "till we have all finished, unless there is something very pressing."

"Lord Greensleeves had quite a cough yesterday, and I am most anxious to hear how he is."

"Very well," replied his father, "and if Lord Greensleeves asks if your mother's leg is any better, just tell him you don't know."

But the sarcasm was lost on him; he heard what was said, but the words had no meaning for him. His mind was 600 yards away.

The ducks were at first a little amused at his pertinacity, but soon they became annoyed, and showed it, too, in spite of their good breeding, in a way the coots, poor though they were, would not have done. But their visitor was blinded by self-conceit and vanity. He got a sore humbling one day, however. He had agreed, for a wonder, to go picnicking with the rest of the family. They swam a mile or two, and then walked on shore, and graceful walkers, I must say, they were ; next they tried diving and running along the bottom of the loch, and then they had a great splashing fight, in which the sons splashed their father and their sisters, but the sons had the worst of it. After that they dressed their feathers, and had dinner, and rested, and then they set out for home. But just as they started, their ambitious brother being a little way ahead, who should appear but Lord Greensleeves and a large company with him ! Young Coot was quite beside himself with excitement ; now, he thought, his family would see for themselves something that would fill them with envy, though, to be sure, he himself would rather his family had not been quite so near him. However, that could not be helped, and there was Lord Greensleeves actually coming straight towards him. Poor Coot wished he had had some clever, striking thing to say, but he was too excited to think now.

Lord Greensleeves came up quite close to him, stared at him pointedly for a moment, long enough to show that there was no mistake about what he did, and then passed on without either

word or smile ! To make things worse, the poor Coot, in his excitement, forgot which foot to paddle with, and turning right round bumped up against one of the ladies of the party. This exposed him to another stony stare, but he saw nothing now ; only he heard as in a confused dream someone saying, " I think the creature must be wong in his mind."

The poor bird never knew how he got home that day. His family never said one word to him about the rebuff he had met, but it was six weeks before he had heart to go fifty yards from home.

But pride revived, and he set off one morning to the reeds where he knew the wild ducks were. He crept stealthily along, his heart beating very fast, and was only a few yards from one of them, when up the wild duck flew, and the same moment two reports of a gun were heard. The sportsman, of course, had not seen the Coot—he was still among the reeds—but the poor bird was sore stricken by the shot ; stricken fatally. He dived at once, but he felt life ebbing fast. Vain confidence, however, stayed by him to the end. " Well, at any rate," he said, " I have been taken for a duck at last," and so thinking, still clutching the weeds at the bottom of the loch with all his might, he died.

An Ancient Copy-Book

σοφου παρ ανδρος προσδεχου συμβουλιαν.
μη πασιν εικη τοις φιλοις πιστευεται.

One of the most interesting acquisitions made by the British Museum last year was a schoolboy's exercise-book, which was found in Egypt and is believed to be seventeen hundred years old.

The Greeks and Romans in those days wrote their letters and accounts on thin wooden boards called *tabulæ*, which were coated with wax. On these the letters were scratched with an iron or wooden pencil, called a *stilus*, from which our word *style* comes. The blunt end of the stilus was flattened out and was used for smoothing the wax when a letter or word had to be effaced. The tablets were usually connected by rings.

The boy's exercise-book I have referred to consists of two leaves of wood, each waxed on one side only, and originally fastened together by leather thongs, the waxed sides being inward. Each leaf has very much the appearance of a modern schoolboy's slate. On the first leaf are the two lines printed above, which the schoolmaster has written as a copy. The pupil has copied the lines twice below, the second copy being rather cramped for want of space. Lines have been ruled to direct his writing, in spite of which, his copy, though legible enough, is not by any means regular. Moreover, the σ at the beginning of the first line having been only

faintly written by the master, the boy has omitted it altogether in both his copies, regardless of the fact that it makes nonsense of the word.

The first of the two lines is known as a verse of Menander, and sounds thus: *Sophou par andros prosdechou sumboulian.* The words, read in this order, 4, 5, 2, 1, 3—for the Greeks did not arrange the parts of speech the way we do—mean, "Accept counsel from a wise man."

The second line is not known, but may very possibly be Menander's also: *me pasin eike tois philois pisteuetai*—"Do not at random trust all friends."

On the second leaf of the book are two columns of the multiplication table, in Greek.

Now, do you not think that that boy would have written his very best if he had known that his copy-book was to be examined by learned men, and exhibited to all the world, after two thousand years? And that schoolmaster too! who has been found out by that "s" of his, like the Ephraimites we read of in the 12th chapter of Judges. Remember that all secrets are to be revealed. God made nothing to be hid. And happy, happy is the man of whom it can be said—

> "Whatever record leap to light,
> He never shall be shamed."

Is it not interesting to find that the boys of all ages and countries have played the same games and done the same lessons? They spun their tops, as Virgil tells us, at their play-hours, and ran into the school to do the multiplication table, and multiplication is vexation. I wonder who

invented it. Probably the same man, as the old saying is, who invented sleep!

And our writing-lessons have been the same. What do you write at school now? In my day, when we wrote "text" or large hand, our headlines were Ammunition, Bannerman, Communion, or Constantinople—we liked Communion best—and K stood for Kettledrum—K was pretty hard to do—and X was Xenophon. For half-text, we wrote "Contradict not rashly," and "Honour your parents," and "Precept teaches, Example draws." Then at last we came to "small hand," and we had long sentences to copy, "Procrastination is the thief of time"—as we have found out by sad experience since—and "Evil Communications corrupt Good Manners." And do you know that that last sentence is taken from the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 15. 33, and that Paul took it from—whom do you think? That same Menander!

φθειρουσιν ἤθη χρῆσθ' ὁμιλιαι κακαι.

Perhaps it was a head-line that Paul's schoolmaster had set him. Menander was a poet who lived in Athens, in the time of Alexander the Great, three hundred years before Christ. He wrote about 100 plays, but only fragments of them remain, 2,400 lines in all. He was drowned while bathing in the harbour five miles from Athens. And he, and Paul, and that schoolmaster, and the little boy, are all still living, and they and we must give in our account together at the last.

The Stolen Letter

SOME years ago a Pillar Letter-Box was set up in our street, but the crows in the rookery close by have never yet made out the meaning of it. Every year it gets a fresh coat of red paint, and the one-year-old crows ask the older ones for a week after to explain the meaning of the thing to them, but no proper explanation is forthcoming. At all hours of the day they see people dropping little white parcels into it, and six times a day, for six days in the week, they see men, who are always dressed alike, coming to the box and opening it and taking all the little parcels away. For a long time the crows thought the men were thieves, and they pitied the poor people who were trying to fill the box and never managed to do so. But at last they noticed that people themselves sometimes handed the little parcels to the thieves and allowed them to put them in the bags at once ; so that that could not be the explanation.

Then the crows thought it was a kind of game such as they saw men and women playing all day on the hill—what we call golf—or like the simpler game which they saw men and lads who were on strike playing for several months every year on the shore—the game that books call *marbles*. But this explanation would hardly do either, for anybody could put the little white things into the slit the very first time he tried.

So the crows gave up guessing. Only they thought the whole performance very silly. All the more so that six times a day they saw the same oddly dressed men going with differently shaped bags and handing the very same little white parcels to the very same people who had put them into the boxes an hour or two before. In the crows' debating societies, when they discussed every year whether human beings had reason or not, the letter-box business was always brought forward as a conclusive proof that men did not even seem to have instinct, much less reason.

There was one crow, however, who was determined to sift the matter to the bottom. He resolved to get hold of one of the parcels and examine it. His wife, when she heard of this, begged him not to do it, and kept begging so earnestly that at last he struck her, and pecked out so many feathers that she could only go out for her errands very early or very late when no other crows were about, and for a whole season she had to decline all invitations to picnics, or rather to "pick-bones," as the crows called afternoon tea.

But a wilful man will have his way, and the crow had his. One day he and his wife saw a man put a letter—only they didn't know it was a letter—into the box. He was in a hurry and the letter stuck in the slit. A moment or two afterwards the crow seized it, and flying off to a quiet corner behind a wall, laid it on the ground, put one foot on it to hold it tight, and then tore it open with his bill. There was nothing in

it, however, but a lot of scribbles and a piece of white heather !

" I don't know what you did last week when you opened that parcel," his wife said, " but I am sure you did wrong. The man who put it into the box is not the same as he was. He looks sad, and he hasn't whistled any for three days, and he was always whistling before. You had no business to open that parcel. It wasn't yours." Whereupon her husband gave her another drubbing, which was all the severer because he knew she was in the right.

One wrong step makes the second wrong step easier, and this crow began to go from bad to worse. He attended the debating societies more diligently than ever, and was made either secretary or treasurer or vice-president, I can't remember which. The fonder he became of talking—and he was really good at it—he became the less fond of working. His poor wife had a hard winter of it. When springtime came and the nest had to be built, she had to find and carry the sticks. Once or twice she recognized in the nest bits that she had seen other crows carrying home, and a great fear fell on her. " I think," she said to him one day, " that instead of debating whether men have reason or only instinct, you should put in your syllabus, as you call it, a question as to whether crows have consciences or not. My people were maybe poor builders—I have heard that often enough from you—but at least they found their own sticks. There was never one of my family a thief."

. . . . . .

About one hour afterwards a young man who was passing—curiously enough the man whose letter had so mysteriously disappeared—saw a strange sight in the field close by. The crows were all gathered together, and had ranged themselves in a circle. Right in the centre was another crow, all alone, who was being tried for murdering his wife, with the alternative charge of stealing sticks. After a good deal of talk, all of course in the crow language, there was dead silence for a few minutes; and then one bird gave a peculiarly solemn croak, and immediately the guilty one was surrounded and pecked to death and torn in pieces.

"That's the strangest thing I've known," said the young man to himself, "since that letter of mine disappeared. I wonder what these crows killed that one for!"

Prof. Robinson Ellis

In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves . . . and those that look out of the windows be darkened.—Eccl. xii. 3.

Not long ago there died at Oxford, aged 79, Mr. Robinson Ellis, the Corpus Professor of Latin Literature, a man who by his edition of Catullus, published forty years ago, helped to raise the name of England for Latin scholarship all over Europe.

His chief duty latterly was the delivery of one or two public lectures every year to the members of the University or any others who chose to come. Four years ago, happening to be in Oxford, I counted myself very happy in having the opportunity of hearing him speak "On certain recent German Editions of some Minor Latin Poets." It was one of the great weeks of the Oxford year, known as the Eights Week, when the annual boat races take place between the different Colleges, eight men in each boat, and the city is filled with visitors from far and near. People who wish to hear about Manilius are not to be found in great numbers anywhere, not even in a University, and least of all amongst those who come simply to attend its festivals; but such was the fame of the man that I thought there might be, peradventure, fifty within the city. But there were not even fifty lacking five, nor forty, nor thirty, no nor twenty; there lacked even one of ten.

At five minutes to the hour there were only three persons present, one undergraduate student, and myself, and a young German scholar whom I had fallen in with in the Corpus Christi court half an hour before, who had come early to secure a seat. His knowledge of the way some eminent professors in his own country are treated might have prepared him for an even smaller audience than nine, but he was evidently astonished. There came, happily, two or three great scholars into the little company, "fit audience though few," and I was only too well pleased, for the honour of the place, at being able to point them out to him. I remember specially how glad I was when he showed his delight at seeing Dr. Murray, the man whose English Dictionary, still unfinished after more than thirty years of labour, is reckoned by foreigners one of the great glories of our land. (I wish it were possible to tell further what everyone who visits Oxford hears of Dr. Murray's high Christian character, and of his valiant adherence to his own dissenting church in a city and amongst a community where such courage and faith are sorely tried.) "And I am glad to have seen Dr. Murray," were the young man's last words to me.

Last May, being again in Oxford, I saw in one of the College courts an intimation that Mr. Robinson Ellis was to lecture next day on Ovid, a Latin poet, some of whose works had for the first time been included in the list of University examination subjects. A few minutes before the hour, the Professor, very blind and feeble, came into the Hall leaning on the arm of a young

Tutor from another College who was to read his lecture for him. It was certainly, in its way, one of the most pathetic sights I have ever seen. There were present only another man and myself. " How many have come ? " I heard the old man ask—he was sitting only a few feet from me—then, without waiting for an answer—and the kind Tutor naturally was in no haste to give one—he continued : " I was not expecting anyone in particular ; I thought perhaps Dr. Murray might come."

When the hour struck we were seven in all. These included a lady, who had evidently come from friendship, one student, Dr. Case, the President of the College, and happily, Dr. or rather Sir James Murray. When the lecture was over, and it was very short, Sir James, in a few kindly, well-chosen words, moved a vote of thanks, and it was touching to see how greatly the aged scholar was pleased by them.

Do you know these lines of Sir Walter Raleigh ? You should learn them off by heart :

" Tell Age it daily wasteth,
Tell Honour how it alters,
Tell Beauty how she blasteth,
Tell Favour how it falters."

There is nothing so short-lived as earthly fame. The glory that lads get even on the football field—and that at present seems the surest and quickest way to fame—is a glory that passeth soon away. The heroes of one Saturday, if they only make a mistake or two, or if some other player outpace or outwit them, are hooted

off the field the next as superfluous veterans, and within a year or two are utterly forgotten. Remember therefore thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Be good at all manly games if you can, and good at your lessons. But seek first the honour that comes from loving and serving God and Jesus Christ Who died for us.

We should pray often for lonely scholars, and lonely missionaries, and all lonely men and women, whether in high place or in low, who are doing great things though there is none to regard them. Remember, as Dr. Wendell Holmes puts it, that there are martyrs who are "frozen in neglect" as well as martyrs who are burnt in the fire.

And if you feel depressed yourself because there is no one to cheer you when you are doing well, then, like young Hugh M'Kail, the Scottish Covenanter, who was hanged in Edinburgh in 1666, "Conceive, think, of the multitude of Angels, who are onlookers."

A New Name

Old Jean was the person whom many people in our end of the town sent for when there was any extra work in the house or any cleaning to be done. "We'll just get Jean," they said, and because she came so willingly, and worked so steadily, and took so little pay, they didn't know how much they had to be thankful for. She was not quite fifty, but the young folk thought her old, not knowing how young that age seems to many. Next to "Old" Jean, "Door-Step" Jean was her most common name. "Oh, but haven't I reason to be thankful!" she often said to herself. "Twenty houses that I go to twice a week to wash their front door steps, and many a body can't get one to do, and a penny every time I go." That was three-and-fourpence of sure money to her every week, and what with various odds and ends her income was rarely less than five shillings, and sometimes it was nearer six. One never-to-be-forgotten week she made no less than nine-and-ninepence, which she called a man's wage. That was a great memory to her, and whenever she felt depressed the thought of it rebuked her and set her singing.

* * * *

There was no denying she was very slow. "Any other woman would do these steps twice over in a fourth of the time," ladies would say when their consciences reproved them as they

sent out twopence to her every Saturday. They preferred paying her that way; a penny a day looked mean. But they forgot that any other woman would have charged twopence, or threepence, every time, and not done them half as well.

"Jacob's Ladder" was the name our young minister gave her. She was the person he saw oftenest whenever he went out the first month he was amongst us. He saw her everywhere, he said, "always either ascending or descending" like the angels. He could hardly say she flew swiftly, but he confessed she made every step she touched so white and pretty that when the richer people in his congregation asked him why he did not call oftener, he would say, "I really do not like to soil the stair!" And people would sometimes laugh as they saw him trying to do three and even four steps at a time.

* * * *

One day as Jean stood in the lobby of a house at whose cleaning she was to help, she heard the maid say to her mistress, "The Stupid Woman has come," and from the way in which the mistress said, "Tell her I'll see her in a moment," she could see that "The Stupid Woman" was evidently her recognized description.

"And I don't say they're wrong," she often said to herself afterwards, "only it hurt me, and I wish they hadn't said it."

It made no odds in her work, however, though it did in her prayers, and from that day forth as she went along the street, or knelt at her washing and scrubbing—for she often felt that hers was a

holy calling, for it kept her on her knees—her favourite name for herself when she spoke to God was—"this sinful, stupid body"—though that wasn't the name He called her by when He spoke of her in presence of the angels.

* * * *

Jean was so much of what we called "an institution" in the place that no one ever thought of praising her. We took her and her work and the way it was done just as we took the sun-rising. It was part of the established order of things. But there was no doubt she now and then had a great longing for a word or two of praise. "I know I'm stupid," she would say, "and maybe far stupider than I think, and yet I'm sure I try to do my best."

And she got a word of praise one day that she never forgot, and in this wise.

When the big laird in our neighbourhood shot his coverts every year, he needed so many guns that some of his guests had to be put up in a large, old-fashioned inn in the town. Amongst these one year was Sir Hubert Holdster, V.C., the colonel of a cavalry regiment, and a great dandy. (It was he of whom his brother officers made up the tale that one day in London, when the streets were covered with mud and snow, and there was no hansom within hail, he gave a man a shilling to carry him across Oxford Street, and finding he had forgotten something, gave him another shilling to take him back again.)

On the day the shooting party broke up, Sir Hubert told his man that he wanted to see the

person who had done the brushing of his boots. To his surprise a timid, gentle-looking woman, with something very sweet and honest in her face, was shown into the room.

"Was it you who did my boots all this week?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you use some special polish? for if you do I would like you to tell my man the name of it."

"No, sir, it's just ordinary blacking, but I always try to do the boots and shoes as well as I can."

"Then I wish to tell you that I have never got them done better in my life, and I am very much obliged to you. It has been a pleasure to me to put them on every day."

I need hardly tell you that Jean left Sir Hubert's presence smiling, and though she never could remember his name—"it was something like Bolster, but it wasn't that"—she never forgot his words, for praise from him was praise indeed, and many a time they cheered her. Indeed, I think I may safely say that there were not many moments in the day in which she was not more or less conscious of them. And many a time she told God about them with a glad heart.

When the late eminent physician, Sir William Broadbent, unexpectedly found himself treated as a distinguished man at a congress at Geneva, he wrote in a letter home these words: "Since I have the reputation, one thing is imperative; I must work harder than ever to make myself worthy of it in some degree. Iron does sharpen iron with a vengeance." And so it was with

Jean. That stranger's words not only cheered her, but they made her strive with all her might to do things even better than she had always done.

* * * *

I have told you only a few of Jean's names. I have often wondered what the angels called her when they had occasion to speak of her to one another or to God. I am sure they, too, must have had many names for her, and each one bonnier than the rest.

And when all Jean's work on earth is done, and it won't be done till the last day—for though she is long dead her influence is not—I wonder what God will call her, and in what New Name He will sum up all she shall then have done, and all she will still have to do, for us and Him.

" I will write upon Him Mine Own new name" —I wonder what that can mean?

Henry Merritt's Crocus

Henry Merritt, a well-known art critic, was born in the most miserable circumstances. The first awakening of his faculty came in this way. When he was in his eleventh year, meanly clothed, poorly fed, an errand-boy getting 1s. 6d. a week, he discovered a garden, peeping with a boy's curiosity through the keyhole in the tall wooden gate. "I looked through the keyhole every time I passed, and that was four times daily, and always with increased interest, for what I now think was a flowering aconite. But oh! trouble upon trouble, one day I found the keyhole stopped, and there was an end of my daily joy and of the interest which had awakened in me a new craving for the wonders of nature." A few days after, grubbing among the rubbish thrown out from this garden, he found a budding something which seemed to him to have "the promise and potency of life," though of what sort he knew not. He took it home and planted it in some earth that he scraped together. It shortly burst out—the first *crocus* he had ever seen. Years after, surrounded with beauty in his studio in London, he described how "one sunny silent Sabbath morning this crocus opened its golden, glowing, sacramental cup, gleaming like light from Heaven, dropped in a dark place, living light and fire."

The Two Currant Shoots

Yet through the scent of water it will bud.—Job xiv. 9.
Thy dead men shall live.—Isaiah xxvi. 19.

"I AM going to have a big lot of berries this year," said one shoot of a red currant bush to another, one lovely March morning, "I feel so full of life."

"Yes," said the other, "I feel strong too, but we had better not boast. It would be well for us both to say, '*if we are spared.*' Many a thing may happen before summer, There may be stormy weather, and the old man who lives here may cut us both off. The bush is getting overladen. There are too many of us, and I saw him looking at us only yesterday."

"There you go, preaching as usual," said the First Shoot, "and always taking a gloomy view of things. It is a little hard that the last thing one hears before winter sets in, and the first thing when it comes to an end, should be a sermon. Whatever you may feel, for my part I have not one bit of fear."

* * * *

That day week a wild wind wrought havoc in the garden, and the Two Shoots found themselves lying on the ground.

"We are done for now," said Number One, an hour or two afterwards, when it had had time to think, "but I suppose you will be quite pleased at finding your prophecy come true."

"I am very sorry," said the other, "both for you and for myself. It is so sad to have to die, and we were both so full of life."

"Ah well," said Number One, "there is nothing for us now, at any rate, but to be thrown into a rubbish heap and burnt, or else be left here till we rot, and I for one don't care now how soon the end comes. But one thing I will say—it isn't fair; we have been treated cruelly, most cruelly and shamefully."

"Certainly," said Number Two, "we are in evil case, and yet I feel sure there is some good in store for us even yet, and if we carry ourselves well in this time of trouble, there will be work and honour for us both."

"I do not believe it," said Number One; "how could that be? It is impossible."

"Well, for one thing, that old man has always a difficulty in finding enough stakes for his peas, and he might stick us in for lack of better."

"What's that you say? Make pea-stakes of us—*us*—us? Turn branches of a fruit tree into props for a common kitchen vegetable? You are most insulting!"

"I assure you no insult was intended," said Number Two, "I was speaking for myself as well as for you, and surely, surely if we can bear no fruit ourselves, the next best thing is to help others to bear it."

"I simply would not stand such degradation for one moment," said Number One, "I should have thought you had some pride left."

"I hope I have not," said Number Two,

"I only fear we are neither of us good enough to be made pea-stakes of."

* * * *

Four weeks later, the old man of the place, having a little early turnip seed over after sowing the six drills he had prepared, made one other row close by a little unused bit of wall. To mark the place he took the two broken Currant Shoots and stuck them in the ground.

"Now," said Number Two, speaking to its comrade, for plants have a wireless telegraphy of their own, "we are to be of some use after all."

But Number One was angrier than ever. "It would have been insult enough if he had made us stakes to prop up his peas with, as you so kindly suggested some time ago, but to make pins of us to let him know where he has sown *turnips* is more than can be borne. Two stones would have done as well. To think that I should have come to this! *You* will very probably think it a crowning honour, but don't say that to *me*. I have had enough to stand already, and you needn't say another word to me, for I won't listen."

* * * *

For some weeks Number Two seemed to hover on the very brink of death, but on the 9th of July it was sure that death had come at last. There were strange sensations all through it, as if its fibres were one moment being pulled tight and the next moment were let go. Had it

not felt it was dying, it would have said it was like growing pains! Three days passed and the twitchings and rendings grew worse, but with them there was such a sense of strength and of the desire to live that at last it began to wonder. "This surely cannot be death," it said, "*can it possibly be new life?*" And then it whispered to its old neighbour, "Are you sleeping? Are you awake? Do you hear me? Do you know, I think I am living?"

But there was no answer, and it was more disheartened than ever. It felt it must be dreaming, and to dream that one was living when one was really dead seemed terrible.

Three days more were spent in agony. Then Sabbath came, and with it great joy. The old man of the house and his wife were sitting in their little summer-seat, as was their wont, after dinner—it was always a tea-dinner that day—talking about a wayward son they had, an engineer on board a ship that traded in Chinese waters, and wondering if God would ever hear their prayers on his behalf. Presently the old man got up and walked over to where the little row of turnips was, and then the next minute he was back. "That's very curious, isn't it?" he said. "One of the two Currant Shoots I put in as marks is living, I counted three buds on it. And I thought it was just dead wood when I put it in!"

Then his wife went over, and she saw the signs of life too, and more than that, for she saw God! "After this," she added, "we mustn't despair of our Willie. A bruised reed shall

He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory."

* * * *

So the Shoot was called *Our Willie* after that, and that's the name it gets still, but it is a little shoot no longer, but a strong and healthy little bush, with new shoots of its own, too. For "Our Willie's" mother watered it and watched it almost night and day; nourished its roots and cleaned its leaves, and all for the sake of the other Willie far away. And what she asked for both has been graciously granted. The engineer has turned out a splendid fellow after all, and when he comes home on furlough in August, the first jelly he is to taste on his favourite home-baked "scones," if all goes well, will be from a boiling of currants off his own namesake tree.

The Story of the Grouse

THERE were six of them besides father and mother, and this, the 22nd of July, was their ninth birthday. That is, they were nine weeks old, for the Grouse count their ages by weeks, not years. Only nine and July nearly over! They were born late in the season, on the 20th of May in fact, and as they were much smaller than most other birds, they were very anxious to be older and bigger. But they were a very happy family, and specially so to-day. Their parents were of high birth, having been born, and their fathers before them for hundreds of years, on one of the loftiest mountains of Scotland, and Grouse boast besides that they are the original inhabitants of the country, being the only kind of bird that is found in Britain and nowhere else in the whole world. They were high born, I say, and brought up their children very simply, but it was their custom every birthday to have a little present for each of them, and sore, sore did the children long till it came round. A week seemed as if it would never pass.

This morning as usual they rose and dressed for breakfast. But so excited were they that they ate but little, and though they had seen two days before that the rain would not come on till late that night, they could not rest till they were off. They always went on their birthday to see the place where they were born, a high tuft of heather down the hill. Somehow it didn't

seem so high as when they were little, but they liked to see it, and then there were the shells they had lived in, or rather bits of them, such a rich dark brown with beautiful black spots ; only, I am sorry to say, they sometimes quarrelled a little over them, for the boys claimed the best, and then the girls cried.

They came home foot-sore and wing-sore, and though they had eaten ever so many *pieces*, and done nothing but drink the whole way, they were as hungry as could be. They tidied themselves and took their places at table, the girls nestling as close to their father as they could. And what clapping of wings when they saw it was white heather for dinner ! Two of the girls rose up and kissed their mother, who had gone a long way for it that morning while they were still asleep, but the boys ate as hard as they could, and one of them actually put his wing twice on the table. But his mother spoke to him, for they all had names, only such queer ones that I can't spell them. The youngest girl, who was not strong, was fast asleep with her father's wing around her.

They all talked, as was right, a good deal during dinner ; the oldest girl most of all. "Oh, I wish," she said, "I was in my 'teens. When shall I be thirteen ?" "Oh, shame," said her father, laughing, "don't you know that, after all the schooling you have had ?" So she began to count on her three toes, though that was forbidden, and then said, "the 9th of August." "Oh, you silly," said her brother—but he was a rare arithmetician—"it's the 12th ; I know

because it is one day after the next full moon." "Very well," said his sister, "it was just a mistake, but I wish it was the 12th. It would be so nice to be in my 'teens, because I should have a long tail, and this is the way I would walk"—but first she asked if she might leave the table. And she walked so prettily, so like her mother, that her father laughed and crowed and crowed, and then his boys after him, till their little sister was awakened. But their mother looked very sad. "My dear," she said, "I hope you will have many birthdays, all very happy; but growing old is a solemn thing. And time passes quick enough; don't long for it to pass quicker. There is many a happy bird to-day that will be in sore trouble to-morrow, through loss of health, or friends, or character. Don't think only of yourself." Then she was silent for a little, for there was a great fear in her heart. That very morning her husband and herself had seen a keeper and his dog on the hills counting the coveys and the birds, and they knew too well what that foreboded. So after a little—and they had all become very quiet—she added, "And besides, my dear, the 12th of August is a sad day in our family history. My mother and my four brothers were killed that day, and my poor father stricken so grievously that he died four days after. It is very natural, my dear, to wish to be older than you are, but you don't know what that means, either for yourself or others."

The Little Postman

THIS is little Roderick in his light-blue linen dress—you can colour the picture yourselves some day during the week—and with his yellow, or what poets and mothers call his golden hair. It is his five-hundredth day, and like all the 499 that have gone before, it is a great day. This is the first time he has carried in the letters, and he is very proud and happy, and full of wonder. And the postman who gave them to him at the door got such a smile from him as will sweeten all his day too.

His first letters! When will he get his last? And how many will he get before that last one comes? Where will they all come from? and where will they find him? How many will he write? to whom? and about what? How many will he get that shall grieve him? how many will he write that shall grieve others? And which of them all will be *the* letter of his life?

And how many will be written about him? Scores have been written already, and all of them kindly, but it will not be so always.

Perhaps he may live to see the day when letter-writing shall have become a lost, because a needless, art. Within a hundred years, perhaps, a mother sitting by her open window, in any village in our land, with her ear to a little tube fixed to the sill, may hear her sailor boy repeat his Sabbath evening psalm from the bridge

of a mighty ship rounding Cape Horn with level keel in a midwinter hurricane; or a good old father may summon, at any hour, his sons and daughters from every corner of the earth, from north, south, east, west, to join in family worship!* Perhaps little Roderick may live to see all these and greater things; perhaps, by God's grace, he may help to bring these things about. And who can tell but that the next letter he may get may be a message from God Himself, to come forthwith to that Happy Land, and that Brighter Home, where neither space nor time can interrupt our fellowship.

* Written in 1908 when there was no thought of "listening in." (ED.)

THE LITTLE POSTMAN

The Rev. John Johnstone

1730-1812

Last month I was in Ecclefechan, the little village in Dumfriesshire in which Thomas Carlyle was born in 1795. It had been such another snowy February morning as was that of the day, according to Froude's description, on which in his 86th year the old man had been laid to rest in the little churchyard there, twenty-eight years ago. I saw the little room in which he was born, some of his letters, a number of his books, his table, his couch, his chair, his hearth-rug, his hat, the class tickets he got on entering College, a boy of fourteen, exactly 100 years ago, and the address of congratulation, sent by sixty or seventy of the foremost men in Britain on his 80th birthday. I saw his odd little pen-wiper, and the wreath for his grave sent by the German Emperor on the centenary of his birth. I saw, too, at the door the little boulder on which in fine evenings when he was a child he set his porringer and ate his supper of bread-crumbs boiled in milk—the same boulder, or, as he calls it in *Sartor Resartus*, the "idle crag six thousand years of age," on which he sat, a boy of twelve, and watched the burn flowing, gurgling, less than twelve feet away, and thought "how that same streamlet had flowed and gurgled, through all changes of weather and of fortune, from beyond the earliest date of history; yes, probably on the morning when Joshua forded

Jordan, even as at the midday when Cæsar, doubtless with difficulty, swam the Nile, yet kept his *Commentaries* dry."

I saw, too, the grave in which lie Carlyle's father, "James Carlyle, and Margaret Aitken, his second Spouse . . . who brought him nine children, whereof four sons and three daughters survive, gratefully reverent of such a Father and such a Mother." And I saw Carlyle's own grave.

In his *Reminiscences* Carlyle tells us that Annandale had long been a lawless Border country. "The people had ceased from foray riding," that is, from making raids into England to steal cattle, "but not from its effects. The 'gallant man' of those districts was still a wild, natural, almost animal man. A select few had only of late united themselves. They had built a little Seceder meeting-house at Ecclefechan, thatched with heath, and chosen them a minister, by name John Johnston, the priestliest man I ever under any ecclesiastical guise was privileged to look upon. He in his last years helped me well with my Latin (as he had done many) and otherwise produced me far higher benefit. This peasant union, this little heath-thatched house, this simple evangelist, together constituted properly the church of that district. They were the blessing and the saving of many. On me, too, their pious Heaven-sent influences still rest and live. Let me employ them well. There was in those days 'a teacher of the people.' He sleeps not far from my father (who built his monument) in the Ecclefechan churchyard.

'Blessed,' I again say, 'are the dead that die in the Lord. They do rest from their labours; their works follow them.'"

Mr. Johnstone's monument is in good order, having been renovated a few years ago by an unnamed "son of one of his members." There are one or two unusual phrases on it. He is spoken of as resting in hope of the "resurrection of life," and is described as a man "endowed with strong natural talents which were cultivated by a liberal education and sanctified by divine influence. He was

as a scholar, respectable,
as a theologian, learned,

and as a minister, able, faithful, and laborious. His unaffected piety, unspotted morals, habitual cheerfulness, and dignified manners

awed the vicious,
edified the saints,

and excited a sentiment of universal esteem and veneration."

Happy the minister, happy the teacher, of whom such things can be truly said!

The Pelican

The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold, and a man is tried by his praise.—Prov. xxvii. 21 (R.V.).

THE Pelican stores the fish it catches in a curious pouch under its bill. When it wishes to eat one, or to give one to its brood, it presses this pouch against its breast and so forces the fish out. The hook at the end of its bill—if you wish to appear very learned, you will say, "at the end of its upper mandible"—is red, and so the fable arose that it fed its young with blood from its own breast.

As it stands motionless in the desert, it is the very picture of melancholy.

* * * *

There was a stuffed Pelican once in a museum, that looked even sadder than it had done while it was yet alive. So one day, during the annual cleaning, when the birds got out of their glass cases and had the chance of speaking to one another, one of the birds said to the Pelican, "Why do you always look so dreadfully depressed? More people gaze at you than at the rest of us put together. I see lady teachers giving lectures about you every Friday, and the children all taking notes. No lady ever lectures about me, except my own wife! Please do look a little more cheery if you can."

"It is just because so many of these teachers will lecture about me," replied the Pelican,

" that I am so down in the mouth. Every one of them tells that ridiculous story about my feeding my young ones with my blood, and there's not a word of truth in it. And then ninety out of every hundred girls make me the subject of their little essays, and they bring their parents and their little brothers and their uncles and their aunts to look at me, and before they begin I know what they are going to say. 'That's the bird I was telling you about, and do you know, it is so fond of its little ones that it feeds them with its own blood!'

" I hear students say that however incompetent a man is who gets a post, in a month's time he not only believes he is fit for it, but other people believe it, too. They say, 'Depend upon it, he wouldn't have got it if he hadn't deserved it.' And it is *that* that is vexing me. I have heard that story, about feeding my young ones, so often that I am beginning to believe it's true! Oh dear! oh dear! It's bad enough to have one's body stuffed with tow and sawdust, but to have my brains taken out and my head stuffed with nonsense like that, and to feel that my conscience is going next—oh dear! oh dear! what am I to do?"

Aunt Peggy

Break forth into singing, and cry aloud: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.—Isaiah liv. 1. Gal. iv. 27.

THE seven or eight ladies who were having afternoon tea at Falcons Hill, one afternoon in May, seemed to be speaking on fourteen or fifteen different things at the same time, when presently the conversation all round turned, in one moment, to the rhododendrons whose flowers were blooming on the borders of the lawn.

"It's a pity," said one of them to the hostess, "that that bush at the corner has no flowers. I think if I were you I should remove it. You don't mind my saying so, do you? Your grounds are so lovely that they can afford to be criticized, but don't you think it looks a little—a little——"

"Scraggy?" said the lady of the house with a smile.

"Oh, no! I fear my envy is making me very rude, but, though I scarcely know what word was in my mind, I know it wasn't that one."

"It's the word that comes to *my* mind every time I look at it," said a lady who had been introduced to the company as "Our Aunt Peggy."

"What I was going to say," resumed the lady, "was this, that that poor bush, when it looks at the others, must feel like a poor relation, don't you know, that would be very well pleased to have some of the other ones' cast-off flowers for her hat."

The hostess meant to tell them that she had sentimental reasons for sparing the bush, but that, besides that, the bush, though it looked for all the world like a collection of old brooms, did its own share of good work at that corner by sheltering one of the flower-beds from the wind when it blew hard, as it often did, from the east. I say she meant to tell them this, but the word *hat* turned the thoughts of her visitors in an instant into a new channel, along which the conversation flowed tumultuously till the chiming of the clock in the hall recalled them to themselves, and reminded them that they each had a husband and a troop of children who were wondering what *could* be keeping Mother so late!

* * * *

"I'm afraid I put my foot in it badly," said the lady who had spoken about a poor relation, as they all passed through the gate that opened to the public road.

"Oh, no!" said one of the others, "we *all* have poor relations, and perhaps, for aught we know, that's the name some of our friends, though poorer than ourselves, may apply to some of us!"

"But how was I to know that their Aunt What-do-you-call-her? was a poor relation? I think people ought to be warned about that kind of thing. I think every person who invites people to her house should send them a sheet of paper beforehand with a list of subjects and topics that she doesn't wish to be spoken about."

"Do you mean that we are all of us to take

our skeletons out of their cupboards, and parade them at the front door whenever we are having company, for that is what your proposal comes to? That would be too dreadful!"

"But I don't know," said another lady, "that Aunt Peggy *is* a poor relation. If all is true that I have heard, she is, if anything, a rich relation. At least they say that amongst their whole connexion—and they have more cousins than my limited and undeveloped mental powers are able to count—she is the one who gives not only the wisest but the handsomest gifts on all occasions, and she is certainly the friend they all send for in any time of trouble, no matter what it be. And did you ever see a sweeter face? I always determine to be good every time I look at her, and I really think that, after I have seen her, I am a better woman for at least three days. My husband says we must hunt up our genealogies, and see if we can't make her out to be a relation of our own, on one side of the house or other!"

"Well, I am sorry I spoke at all, but it was the putting of the word 'scraggy' into my mouth, and the smile with which it was done, that put me all wrong."

"Oh! that's one of their little family jokes, don't you know? and it is about that same Aunt Peggy. She tells it herself. It was in Edinburgh, at the Waverley Station, and she was making for a through carriage for Aberdeen, when she heard a young fellow say to his companion who was sitting next the window—'For any sake don't let that scraggy old character

come in here,' and, ever since, one of the names she likes to sign her letters with is 'Old Scraggy.'"

* * * *

Five months afterwards, in mid-October, our blundering friend was at Falcons Hill once more. As she sat at the window she was admiring what seemed a perfect pyramid of cresses or nasturtiums.

"Oh, how lovely! I never did see a prettier sight. So many flowers, and such variety of colour, from the palest yellow up through the brightest scarlet to the duskiest brown! It just looks like the fire one loves to see on a wintry day; there's heat and flame and the promise of more for a good while to come. . . . But you don't mean to tell me that that is the dead-looking rhododendron that was there in spring that the nasturtiums are clinging to?"

"Yes, it is, and it is some years now since it had any flowers of its own, and the gardener was so angry at its being there that at last we told him to pull it up. But our Aunt Peggy—do you remember her? I think you must have met her here—begged us to spare it one more year. She said it seemed to her to be so like herself, so old and withered and forlorn, that her heart went out to it, poor thing, and she wondered if it could not be made of some use, after all. So we spared it for her sake, and she, without telling us, sowed some varieties of fine nasturtium seed underneath and round about it, and every September and October since, specially in bois-

terous weather, when other flowers are fading and the place begins to look so chilly and untidy, that bright blaze of colour asserts itself like the crimson on a robin's breast among the autumn leaves, and that clump is even more admired than its companions were in May. And we call the bush *Aunt Peggy*, for we seem to see her in it. There is not one in all our connexion that has not had to cling to her in some trouble, and she has been a stay and shelter to us all."

"And I don't wonder," said the visitor, who had been learning some things during these five months, "that you see her in that 'burning bush.' I think I see her there myself, and I hope I see Another there beside her!"

Sir James Anderson

When a great soldier is carried to the grave, they put his helmet and his sword and his decorations on the bier, his riderless horse following after; and when an admiral is buried, they put a few fathoms of chain cable from his flagship round his grave. So, when Sir James Anderson was laid to rest in his native town, Dumfries, it was fit and proper that on the coffin-lid there should be laid a piece of Atlantic telegraph cable.

He was apprenticed in his boyhood to a printer, but his heart was in the sea. By working over-time, his brother and he and one or two others saved enough money to buy a battered old boat made of sheet-iron. They paid a pound for it, all in coppers. He named it the "Harpy," but his friends called it "Anderson's Canister."

When he was sixteen, his parents yielded to his desire and allowed him to become a sailor.

From the first night he was at sea, as he stood looking at the men aloft reefing the top-sails, he said to himself he would be a captain. And a captain he became—one of the greatest captains of our age.

Before he left home, his mother made him promise to kneel down night and morning and say his prayers, no matter whether the sailors should laugh at him or not.

His first voyage was to India, and his promise was easy to keep on the way out, for the sailors were all decent men. But on his way home

there were some new men in the crew, and his courage was sorely tried, but he knelt as usual. One of the strange sailors seeing this, went forward and boxed his ears, saying, "None of that here!" Another, however, took the lad's part, and challenged the first to come upon deck and he would thrash him. So there was a fight, and after it, the man who sided with him said, "Now, Jamie, say your prayers, and if he touches you again I'll give him another dressing."

Next night, James, thinking it a pity to cause a disturbance needlessly, resolved to say his prayers quietly in his hammock. But the instant he had climbed up into it, his friend took him by the neck and dragged him out and said, "Kneel down this moment! Do you think I'm going to fight for you, and you not say your prayers, you young rascal!"

But he worked as well as prayed, and soon became an expert in all questions both of seamanship and navigation. Years of experience in command soon followed, such experience as only they who go down to sea in ships can have; and then in one hour came the work and honour for which he had during his youth and early manhood been unconsciously preparing.

There are now fourteen telegraph cables crossing the Atlantic, and by any one of them one word can be sent from Europe to America in one minute for one shilling. We owe that in great measure to Captain Anderson. A cable had been laid in 1858, but after a few messages had been sent by it, it ceased to speak. The last word it said was "Forward"—the same word

which Nansen gave as a name to the ship on which he set out on his perilous, but glorious voyage to the Furthest North.

It was 1865 before another attempt was made. The whole cable this time was put on board one ship—the *Great Eastern*—and Captain Anderson, at that time commander of the Cunard S.S. *China*, was specially chosen to take charge of her. He was in his forty-first year. The result was disheartening in the extreme. Time after time flaws were discovered in the cable, and miles and miles of it had to be hauled in again. The cable was made up of seven copper wires, which were surrounded with layers of tar and resin and gutta-percha and jute, the whole being sheathed with ten iron wires each wrapped in tarred yarn. The whole cable was 1⅛ inch thick. One of the flaws, one is grieved to say, had been made intentionally by some man on board. When 1,062 miles of it had been laid, the cable snapped in two, and with one bound flew into the sea, which was at that point three miles deep. After vainly trying to recover it, the *Great Eastern* had to turn back.

By next year, however, owing chiefly to Captain Anderson's persuasion, another cable had been made, and on Friday, 13th July, the great ship set sail once more, and finished the first part of her task in fourteen days. Then she turned back and began to fish for the cable lost the year before! Time after time they felt they had it, only to lose it again. Once they actually had it on board and were putting out their hands to grip it when it escaped. For

eighteen days they toiled in vain; they had spoilt almost twenty miles of grapnel line, and provisions and coal were getting done, when the long succession of stormy days and nights through which they had struggled came to an end, and for fifty hours they had calm weather. During these hours they made one more attempt, and succeeded, 2nd September, 1866. This cable is still working, and it was a part of it that was laid on that coffin seven weeks ago.

Sir James was as modest in victory as he had been calm and courageous in defeat. I have read few things more beautiful than the kind references he made at banquets held in his honour to the many fine sailors he had known who would have done all that he had done if only they had got the chance. I think he deserves a foremost place amongst the world's great seamen. Columbus and the explorers before and since his day found out new oceans and new worlds. It was Captain Anderson who bridged those oceans and made those worlds one. There are fresh tasks and new honours for every age, but only those get them whom God finds "ready, with their lamps burning and their loins girt." The secret of Sir James Anderson's life is to be found in the words of the old hymn his mother had taught him, which he uttered a few moments before he died :

> "I come, I come, at Thy command,
> I give my spirit to Thy hand."

Old Mr. Shaw

For thus saith the Lord of the men that keep My Sabbath: Unto them will I give in My house and within My walls a memorial and a name better than of sons and daughters. —Isaiah lvi. 4 (R.V.).

Old Mr. Shaw who kept the little school on the other side of the hill seven miles away, and Miss M'Quoid who had five miles to come, and had more pains and aches in her body than any other three people in the countryside put together, were always the first in church on Sabbath. Of the nine who were always late, two lived across the street, and the other seven within a stonecast of the church. When therefore Mr. Shaw came in one Sabbath an hour late, we all looked at one another, and the minister, who had evidently been disconcerted at the sight of the empty seat, regained his colour and composure, and gave a cheerier ending to his sermon than we were looking for.

The Sabbath after, Mr. Shaw was again late. It was a young probationer who was preaching his first sermon that day, and in his excitement forgot the last two heads of his discourse, so that, to the joy of the young people and the still greater joy of the old folk, though they pretended to be displeased, we got out of church a "whole half-hour" sooner than usual. Mr. Shaw was so late that all he heard was the last Psalm and the benediction.

"We were all on short commons to-day,

William," said one of his brother elders to him, "but I reckon you got none at all."

"You reckon wrong then," was the answer, "for I never heard that Psalm so beautifully read; it became quite new to me; and besides I got the benediction, and you don't call that nothing, do you? No, no; *satis viatici*, I have got enough to do me the whole road home; indeed I think I could go in the strength of that meat till my travelling days are done."

* * * *

Yet the poor probationer slept none that night, and slipped away from the village next morning while we were all sleeping. But a milkmaid saw him. "It had just struck five, and he had his bag with him. I was real sorry for him. I think a young preacher is to be pitied. If I had only thought of it in time, I could have given him a drink of warm milk."

* * * *

Aye, but what was it that made Mr. Shaw late? We didn't know at the time, but it was found out by accident afterwards. And it was this:

They were making a reservoir in the hills for the water supply of a big town fifteen miles off, and a host of navvies had been brought in to do the work. Great strong fellows they were, but many of them went wild with drink every Saturday. On the Sabbaths two miles of highway, along which the men passed on their way, backwards and forwards, from the sheds in which they were housed, to the inn where they spent

their wages, were littered here and there with sleeping men and broken bottles. What the old schoolmaster did for the men, not only on Sabbaths but every weekday, would take too long to tell. But I wish to tell you what he did with the bottles.

The district of which I am speaking lies in the south of Scotland, and is famous in our nation's history. Its roads were the joy of cyclists and motorists, though the navvies changed that for a time.

It was not only the sin of the living that vexed the old man's soul, but the dishonour that was brought on the noble dead. Not once nor twice only did he hear men say as they rode past some drunken man, "There's another descendant of the godly Covenanters!" And the sin those tourists brought on their own souls as they cursed and swore over their punctured and ruined tyres vexed him also. Specially did he remember the rage and blasphemy of a handsome Englishman, whose salutation to him was: "That's twenty pounds of damage you drunken Scotchmen have done me this afternoon."

It was after that that Mr. Shaw determined to clear the road on Sabbath mornings. And if any of you have ever picked up all the fragments of one broken bottle, you can guess what it means to pick up the débris of twenty or thirty scattered over two miles of road. It was gathering these up that made the schoolmaster late, though he had set out on his way two hours earlier than was his wont. After two or three Sabbaths' experience he got on much quicker, for he made himself a

little brush of twigs, and bought a little shovel which went easily into his coat-tail pocket. "I wouldn't be a bit sorry for these men," he said, "that go flying about on the Sabbath if a puncture, as they call it, cost them only a shilling or two, and if the accident could be said to be the act of God. But it costs them pounds, they say, and it's caused by whisky bottles. I'll sweep the road, not only for their sakes, and for Scotland's, but *for Thy sake*"; and then he repeated to himself George Herbert's famous lines :

"A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine ;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine."

* * * *

One Sabbath in the autumn of that year—the bottles had been unusually plentiful that morning—he met two gentlemen in a motor. They had lost their map and were in doubt as to the road. Mr. Shaw told them, "though," he added, "I am not sure that I am doing right in telling you. You are doing wrong going about this way. The Sabbath was not given us for motoring."

"No preaching, please, but you might tell us if it is in this neighbourhood that a famous busker of fishing-flies lives ; it's a name like Shore. We want to buy some from him."

"There is such a man, but you needn't go to him to-day, and I'm not going to tell you where his house is."

"Well, I suppose if we had asked you to tell us where a public-house is, you would have had no objection either to tell us or go with us !"

And so saying they set off, tooting their motor-horn derisively, and forgetting the exhortation which saith :

" Lift not your horn on high."

Mr. Shaw's minister had been out early visiting a dying lad, and as he had a little time to spare, had sat down by the roadside to rest a little and think over what he meant to say that day. They would have passed by without noticing him, but the mocking sound of the horn's laughter in the distance had made him rise up. Here was a new chance to them. " I suppose," said one of the men to him, " that old man we met half a mile back is one of your flock. You do seem to raise a breed of proper hypocrites hereabouts. He has any amount of conscientious scruples, but I dare-say he would have taken as much drink as we would have offered him."

" If it is the man I take it to be from the words you use, you are quite mistaken. There's no better man in the country; he——"

" Oh, don't you begin to preach next ; we have had enough of that from him already."

" But I *am* going to preach, and you had better listen, for I am afraid that what you have said is actionable, and you have said it before witnesses, and I have taken the number of your car. That old man is a saint and a scholar—he reads Greek with his feet on the fender, if you know the meaning of that expression—and as for your hinting that he is a drunkard, I'll tell you what he has done every Sabbath morning for you motorists, little as you deserve it."

As the minister went on with his story the two men began to be ashamed, and at last one of them said, "That's what I call not half-bad! He's a good sort after all! But you see I was angry. We asked for the address of a man of whom we heard in England, a Mr. Shore, a great busker of flies, and he point-blank refused to tell us!"

"And that's very like him, for he is the man himself! And I think you should send back an apology with me. I'll see him in church in a little."

"You must let us take the apology to him ourselves. I don't suppose, sir, you would care to drive with us, but we'll follow in a little."

"If you mean to come to church, we shall all be more than pleased to see you, but I fear you'll find it a little trying."

* * * *

But they went, all the same, and having asked the elder at the door to take them to Mr. Shaw's seat, the two men, to the great wonder of those of the congregation who were already in church, went down the aisle to where the old schoolmaster was sitting, and, holding out their hands to him, said, "You see, sir, we have found out Mr. Shore in spite of you, and have come to apologize to him!"

* * * *

And the chauffeur was in church, too; only he went to the gallery and found out from some young fellows there that the old schoolmaster in his day had been the best wrestler in all that

countryside and even yet was more than a match for most of the navvies who had come to grips with him. And the chauffeur heard some other things that day that he has not forgotten, and never will forget.

* * * *

The young man, the owner of the car, has tried hard to get the old man to come and see him at his place in England, but has not succeeded so far. But he has spread his fame far and wide, and sometimes when he is out golfing or shooting, and taking a few minutes' rest for lunch, some of his friends will break the silence thus : " I say, Charlie, you might tell us that yarn about that proper old hypocrite you tooted your horn at in Scotland one Sunday morn."

Ezekiel's Send-Off

Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing.—Ezekiel iii. 12 (R.V.).

Mr. Annand of Tien-tsin, one of the agents of the National Bible Society of Scotland, told me once that the Chinese have a phrase—Pu ying pu sung—which describes the height of bad manners. It means "neither received nor escorted," and describes a man who treats his guests shabbily, who neither meets them properly at his door or before they come to his door, nor goes a bit of the road with them when they go away. We have all seen a group of people on a railway platform, or at a quay, bidding a lad good-bye and wishing him a safe journey. We say, he must be going abroad, what a lot of friends he has, and what a fine-looking company they are! Aren't they giving him a good send-off?

Ezekiel was setting out on a journey with a hard, hard task before him, and his heart was sore. The Cherubim, as it were, came to set him forward on his journey, as the apostle John puts it "worthily of God," and they came in all their glory. They are described as "living creatures," immortal, and therefore for ever young; full of eyes, observant, watchful, kindly, wise; like mighty whirling wheels, instant and quick in movement; majestic, irresistible, they turn not as they go, and they fly swiftly; ever ready, they lose no time in setting off; they never blunder, they never miss their way. Ezekiel heard them rushing, like one of the hosts of God; rushing

because they were eager and willing and glad, rushing with the impetus born of their last high task.

But there is one other specially beautiful thing that is told of them. "I heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures as they kissed one another," for that is the proper meaning of the word that is, I think unfortunately, translated touch. The Hebrew word is used thirty times in the Old Testament, and is translated twenty-eight times "kiss." In Genesis xli. 40, "according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled," it should also have been translated kiss, that is, do homage, just as in our own country men who are appointed to high office kiss the Sovereign's hand. The wings of the Angels kiss one another. That means not only that they touch as horsemen do who ride knee to knee, so close are they; it means also that the joy they feel as they think of the holiness and redeeming love of God goes through every part of their being, so that they thrill with emotion and delight. We know how much meaning and affection our Lord and all who loved Him could put into a touch. We know how a mother and her child draw close to one another when they share some thought or joy. And so it was with these Angels. Ezekiel was going forth to attempt a task that was beyond their powers. And they were glad; so glad that they could not put their pleasure into words. They were not fit to do Ezekiel's work, but they could cheer him and admire him, and they would help him all they could. And God was going with the prophet, and He had asked the Angels to follow in His train.

The Road Menders

Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field.—Job v. 21.

Sir Crowsley Crowsley-Wootten was the seventh baronet of his line. He had a great many other christian names besides Crowsley, but as they would fill nearly two lines, whereas this explanation, as is the manner of explanations, will take up only four or five times that space, I shall not trouble you with them. Besides, if I told you them all, some people might say I had made them out of my own head. His mother, happily for him as he used to say when he was a man, was a Scotswoman, and as his father had died when he was only two years old, she and her little boy used to spend several months every year with his uncle and aunt on their estate in the south of Scotland.

* * * *

When he was a child, no one who wished to speak the truth would ever have called him beautiful, but he certainly looked a sensible child, and he was both kind and kindly; and very persevering, being in fact seven times more persevering than most of the children one meets. "Isn't he a determined little character?" the labourers about the place were constantly remarking as they watched him in all he did. As he got older he grew handsomer—and it is better that way than the other—so that when he was a man and a ruler of a great province in India,

the natives used to gaze at him with wonder and reverence.

Everybody liked him, but his chief friend was old Mr. Dymock—as his nurse taught him to call him—the roadman. He used to stand at a safe distance, for the sake of his eyes, and watch the old man breaking the stones. There is a great knack in it, and Mr. Dymock was as good at his work as any man could be. Stone-breaking doesn't seem at first sight a particularly noble occupation, but the old man had been led into it, somehow or other, by the providence of God. He read every wise book he could get hold of, and as he was always thinking, and always observing, and always willing and eager to do anybody a kind turn, he was the greatest power for good in the whole parish, though people didn't know that till he was dead.

Little Sir Crowsley loved best to be at the stone heap when the old man took his dinner at 12 o'clock, a tin can of potato soup or some kind of broth warmed at a neighbouring cottage—for he lived two miles away—and a goodly piece of oatmeal bannock. Now and again, if his wife's hens were in a contributory mood, he would have a hard-boiled egg. The little baronet noticed that the old man always bared his head when he asked a blessing before his meal and when he gave thanks after it, for the custom of "saying grace" after meat was still very common in Scotland; and of course the boy took off his hat, too, in sympathy!

Now, that put Mr. Dymock in an awkward position, for he did all the eating and yet the little

lad had to join in the thanksgiving before and after! And yet—how could he ask the boy to share his meal with him?

* * * *

Some years before, the old roadman had done some kindness to two ladies whose carriage had broken down, and had received from them a pretty little penknife as a gift for his wife. He had refused, most gratefully but firmly, the half-sovereign which they had kindly urged him to take. "Half a sovereign! Four days' pay for one hour's work! The thing," he said was "fair ridiculous." But as he saw they were in earnest he took the knife; and now he bethought him of it. It had been carefully laid past, and was as clean and bright as if it had been new. When therefore the little lad came as usual and was sitting watching him, like the robin that always turned up at meal-time, the old man produced the clean tissue-paper in which the knife was wrapped, took out the knife, and cut a little slice out of the middle of the hard-boiled egg—it had a lovely yellow yolk—and offered it to his little guest, who, nothing loth, took it and a little salt with it, and devoured it instanter. It was as sweet a morsel, he thought, as he had ever tasted. So it "became a statute in Israel." Every day the old man had an egg Sir Crowsley Crowsley-Wootten, Bart., had a slice of it; and he told how good it was when he got home.

But his uncle the Major and his wife told him that if he was to eat up Mr. Dymock's dinner that way every day, he must help to provide it! And so it came about that the child would take an

apple or a big juicy pear, of which the old man always laid past a piece, and not the smallest piece, for his old wife, who thought it perfectly sinful to eat things that were so good! One day in special the child never forgot as long as he lived. The Major had brought down from London a little bunch of bananas, a fruit then almost unknown in Scotland, and bade his nephew take one of them to his friend. The old man had never seen a banana before, and made such eyes as he stripped and tasted it, very cautiously to begin with, that the boy imitated him when he got home, and in later years when he lived abroad would often set the table in a roar by the way he reproduced the scene.

Mr. Dymock had a great fear that the Jesuits might get hold of the little lad. He knew how they had crept in unawares under various disguises into one or two noble houses in Scotland, and history books, of which he was a great reader, told him what Romanism had been to every country that had come under its sway. He tried, therefore, with all his might to win the boy to Christ while he was yet young. As John Knox did to his scholars, so did he, exhorting the boy "to know God and His work in our country, and stand by the good cause, and use his time well." For this reason he would often tell him stories about the Covenanters, one of whose monuments was visible from a little knoll a few yards from the stone heap.

* * * *

One of Mr. Dymock's trials was the fact that the inspector of the roads in that country was a

very ignorant, pretentious, blustering man. When he came every now and again to measure the quantity of stones the old man had broken, he would talk about the mathematics of the thing as if he had been a Sir George Airy or a Mr. John Couch Adams, calculating the date of an eclipse or weighing an unseen planet, proving to us

> "How the wild swayings of our planet show
> That worlds unseen surround the world we know."

When the boy heard of this terrible man's coming, he gathered a number of the prettiest and largest white quartz stones he could find in the rockeries around his uncle's house, and wheeled them in his simplicity to add to the old man's heap. Mr. Dymock of course received them graciously, for the thing was kindly meant and kindly done. Then he gathered them all into a corner of the roadside recess or bay in which he worked, and built with them a tiny little white monument, to the child's great joy!

* * * *

When, after many years, Sir Crowsley Crowsley-Wootten, Bart., came home from India on furlough, with other letters after his name more to be valued than those which had come to him by birth, the little white monument, of course, had disappeared, and the old man who had built it was gone, though his words and example and prayers lived on in a hundred ways. There were many other changes in the place, too. The little bay where the grey whinstone road metal used to be piled was now almost filled up, but he recognized to his great delight the big smooth boulder on which old Mr.

Dymock used to sit and so reverently take off his cap before beginning his midday meal. He had forgotten the boulder, and it didn't look quite so big as when he was a little boy, but the sight of it stirred up his memory and touched his heart. So much so, indeed, that when he returned to his seat in England, he took it with him. It was the only bit of loot, he said, he had ever carried off for himself, and he had had many opportunities of adding other people's heirlooms to his own. The railway porters at some junction or other succeeded at last in breaking it in two. "They couldn't see what use on earth it could be to anybody. Sir Jim Crowstone, or whatever his name was, must be some old fool who didn't know what to do with his money." But the stone, though in two pieces, reached him at last. The village blacksmith fitted it together with a wrought-iron band, and made a little railing to enclose it. It stands on a low mound a hundred yards or so from the Castle door, and all visitors and passers-by may read these words on it :

A Stone of Remembrance.
The daily Resting-place,
While he was yet alive, of
JOHN DYMOCK,
Road-Mender, and Man of God,
In the Parish of Radrock, N.B.,
Who died in 1876, aged 70.

Some people smile at the thing, but even they are compelled to think for a moment or two. To Sir Crowsley and his family and household, and to many of his friends, it is like Jacob's pillar; it is none other but the house of God, it is the gate of Heaven.

Katie

And the Lord spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain . . . and die in the mount whither thou goest up.—Deut. xxxii. 48.

In the parish of South Knapdale, in Argyllshire, on a hillside overlooking Loch Killisport, a little arm of the sea in the Sound of Jura, there stands a lonely cairn of white quartz. It can be plainly seen, shining out amidst the rocks and heather, from almost every direction, and the few inhabitants of that thinly peopled district are all very willing to tell its story.

On an April Saturday morning, twenty years ago, the little daughter of a shepherd employed on the farm of Cove wandered away from her mother's door. She had been in the habit of going down the hill to play with the children who lived in the cottages near the shore. Her mother, who had a baby, felt no anxiety till the afternoon wore on and snow began to fall heavily. She ran down to the cottages, but to her dismay found that her little daughter had not been there that day. A fruitless search along the river side, and in the wood, and by the shore was made. They never thought the little feet could have climbed the rough mountain-side. Day after day they searched, till a whole week was past. Then, on the second Sabbath, from further parts of the county, folk came to help, and, forming a long line as beaters do when they are driving game, traversed hill and hollow, moor and glen.

They found little Katie lying in the snow, her

LOST ON CROCDUBH

cheek resting on her hand, just as if she had lain down and gently fallen asleep.

They laid her body in the little graveyard beside the river, and the stone over her tells the touching story in these words :

" Duncan M'Lellan, Shepherd, Cove. In Memory of his Daughter Katie, aged 2¼ years, who strayed from home on 16th and was found dead on 24th April, 1892, on Crocdubh, Loch-head. A Cairn of Stones marks the spot where she was found."

The Cairn on the hill simply bears her initials, C. M.

Her people have long since left the place, but the memory of the lost child lingers on among her native hills.

Doesn't it seem strange that the child of the shepherd, whose life was spent in caring for his master's sheep and lambs, should herself perish on the hills her father knew so well? But the Chief Shepherd had gathered her safely in His Own arms.

Old people are " afraid of that which is high," but something seems to draw children to the heights, towards Heaven which is their home.

No history could be less like that of Moses, in almost every way, than hers. She had no share in the midtime of his days, but her brief span of life took in both the beginning and the end of his. " Behold, the babe wept." " And Moses went up into the mountain and died there." One wonders if she had any fear. And what vision did she have through her tears before she saw the King in His beauty and found herself singing the song of Moses and the Lamb?

Johnnie Leeds

Prisoners of hope.—Zech. ix. 12.

THE trippers and holiday makers who passed through our little village every July and August seemed to think that we people who had cottages and gardens could not possibly have any trials. They knew nothing about the digging and the planting and the pruning and the weeding we had to do, and the cleaning of the walks, and the trimming of the borders, and the cutting of the grass, and they had never heard of the green-flies that ruined our roses, and the wire-worms that made our carrots droop and fade away, and the caterpillars and the slugs and snails that riddled the cabbages, and the frosts in May that nipped the apple-blossom. And they had never known the weariness of digging up, day after day, row after row of uneatable potatoes.

In addition to their own special trials, the people that have gardens have the trials that are common to men. There are sore hearts in cottages as well as in kings' palaces.

Dr. Chalmers once overheard one woman ask another—towards the end of a long journey during which no word had passed between them—"Were you happy in your jeel?" Had that question been put to old Mrs. Leeds, in the summer of which I am speaking, she would certainly have said "No." It had not been a good fruit year, there had been heavy rains, and the preserves she had made had not done well.

On the Monday of our story she had gone over her berry bushes for the last time, and had got a little basinful of rasps and currants, red, and white, and black. Amongst them, too, were a dozen belated strawberries that had escaped the vigilant eyes of the blackbirds. The juice of these, all mixed together, a large handful at a time, she was straining through a piece of old linen cloth, when her neighbour, a young wife who had four sturdy little boys, came in for five minutes' rest and talk. The second oldest had been disobedient and she had had to whip him.

"It would have been better for me to-day if I had whipped mine," said Mrs. Leeds.

Johnnie Leeds had been what is called a spoilt child, and had all the marks and symptoms of one. While little more than a babe in arms, he ate and drank and slept only when he chose, screamed at his own food, and clamoured for scraps of what his parents were eating, and got them, as being, to use his mother's proud description of him, such a difficult child to feed. The silver spoon her late mistress had given him he used for hammering on whatever made the loudest noise. To get him to bed was harder work than getting a ship out of its cradle, and the ways had to be greased with much coaxing and candy. Five minutes after he was in, he was climbing out again, and for another hour or two, and sometimes for three, his mother had to entertain him now with this, and now with that, till she herself was like to drop through weariness, and then—"Did you ever know of such a clever

little fellow?"—he would slap her in the face. But that of course, though painful, was all in fun; "mother's pet" did not know how it hurt her; he would get sense as he grew older. Years came, but not sense with them, though his playmates, to whom his flaxen curls were an unceasing source of ridicule, tried so hard to put sense into him that his mother had to remove him from their company and jurisdiction. While they were playing and learning in their play to use their eyes and hands and limbs and practise courtesy, he sat on the dyke with his bag of sweetmeats and the latest needless toy his foolish father had brought home.

His parents were not left without other warning. Her neighbours shouted across her garden to their own children observations that were clearly meant for Johnnie's benefit. Next, an old elder called and begged them to read the story of Eli. He marked the page for them in the Bible that was with some difficulty found, and was forbidden the house ever after for his pains. But the most solemn warning came from their young minister one afternoon. Johnnie had been marching out and in, as he always did when any visitor was present, interrupting the conversation, demanding "pieces," and telling the kind of jam he did not want.

"You'll get it if you are good," his mother would say, to which she invariably added as he screamed, "Here it is, pet, and see and be a good boy, and run away out and play, like a dear!"

Presently he was back, clamouring for his ball, and telling her he wanted it "at once." How

long the minister would have borne with this I do not know, but when the boy crowned impudence with downright disobedience and then struck his mother in the face—for which she kissed him through her tears—the minister felt it was time to speak—and act.

Taking the boy by the hand and asking God in a few words to help him to speak wisely, he asked the boy to beg his mother's pardon.

"I'm wanting out!" he roared, "let me go!"

"Not till you beg your mother's pardon."

And then followed a fearful half-hour.

"You will make him take convulsions," his mother pleaded.

"No fear of convulsions," said the minister, "and even if there were, there are worse things." But all the same it was a relief to him, a big relief, when the boy gave in at last.

His father went to a lawyer next day, and was with much difficulty prevented from putting the matter into the hands of the police. But his wife and he left the church. Johnnie himself, however, felt all the better for what the minister had done, and had his mother had the sense to walk in the new road that had been pointed out to her, he would have been a made man for life.

I hardly need to tell you what that kind of upbringing resulted in. Johnnie's parents had said they would let no man on earth lay his hand on their bairn. Within a few years they had to entreat the interference of neighbours, and then there came one awful night when the mother herself had to run and bring in the police.

Twenty years had passed since then. Mrs.

Leeds was now a widow. Her son was somewhere in Australia—that was all she knew.

"Let me give the berries a squeeze for you," her young neighbour said on the night of our story. "It's tedious work, and my wrist is a little stronger than yours. I'm used to wringing."

"I wouldn't have thought it possible there could be so much juice left in the berries," said Mrs. Leeds after a little, "but I think it's all squeezed out of them now. I'll get a whole pot more jelly out of it than I bargained for!"

And then she emptied the bruised seeds and skins on to a tray—a many-tinted mass of refuse, purple, red, and brown. "You've squeezed it well," she said. "It couldn't have been better done though we had passed it through a mangle." But even as she spoke the big heap broke in two, and right in the very heart of it there were two currants, a white one and a black one, perfectly whole, quite unbroken!

"That beats all," said Mrs. Leeds. "Who would have thought it possible?"

Next forenoon her young neighbour was in early. "Do you know what I've been thinking, Mrs. Leeds? An idea came into my head last night, and I can't get it out."

"Was it about the two whole currants?"

"Yes."

"Well, I reckon it is the same idea that came into mine, and I can't get it out either. Many's the time I've thought that all that was good must have been crushed out of my boy's mind long, long ago. If ever anyone has been ground in a hard mill he has, and yet, though I fear he

learned no good from me, fond of him as I was, maybe some word that he heard from the minister and the elder may have survived it all ; it's hard to say what things may keep sweet and fresh even in a heart that has been crushed and crushed till it seems to have become a heart of stone. The heart of stone may be made a heart of flesh yet ! "

And in that hope Mrs. Leeds, who had long ago " accepted the punishment of her iniquity," lived, and in that hope she died.

"Someday"

THERE is a story of a seasick French officer, a passenger in a British ship, who thought that "by-and-by" was a kind of pudding which the steward promised but never brought.

I was reminded somehow of this the other day by what a friend told me about a little boy, two years and ten months old. It was no use, she said, to tell him so long ahead that anyone was coming on a visit in a week or so, because he got annoyed if the expected one did not at once mount the stair. He knows the names of the days of the week, and she has been teaching him to string them together in order. But she has found that he believes there is an Eighth Day, "Someday" by name. It is not a confusion with any other day, but the result of his having been constantly told, like us all, that such and such a thing would occur some day, and so it is as much one of the days as Monday or Tuesday to him.

"Someday" unhappily bulks large in all our calendars. It has many other names. Felix, the Governor whom Paul entreated to turn from his evil ways, called it the "convenient season," which, as Illingworth says, "he also hoped might never come." In Spain—it is a very common word there—they call it "Manana"—that is to-morrow—and to-morrow, we all know, is the day that never arrives. Do you remember what Mr. Barrie says about Maimie and Tony in his *Little White Bird*? Maimie was one of the kind

who like to fix a day for doing things, but Tony was not that kind, and when she asked him which day he was to remain behind in the Gardens after the gates were locked, he merely replied, "Just some day." He was quite vague about which day except when she asked, "Will it be to-day?" and then he could always say for certain *it would not be to-day*. "So she saw he was waiting for a real good chance."

"Look in my face; my name is Might-have-been;
I am also called No-more, Too late, Farewell."

One of God's names for it is *The Day of Provocation*.

It is also the day of needless fears. The Psalmist David called it Oneday, when he said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." Paul calls it Things-to-come; we call it The Unknown, The Unforeseen, The Possible, The Tolerably Certain, The Future, The Impossible-to-stand-it-any-more. And the people who are always dreading it may be called, to borrow a description used by Mark Twain in another connexion, "the Supposers, the Perhapsers, the Must Be-ers, the Without-a-Shadow-of-Doubt-ers, the We-are-Warranted-in-Believing-ers, and all that crop of solemn architects who take a foundation of a few unimportant facts or fancies, and build upon them a conjectural edifice thirty miles high." Our Saviour calls them, "O ye of little faith!"

But "Someday" is also the day of undeserved and unexpected and unimaginable mercy. It is the day of gladsome surprise, when God does

exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. The Bible calls it a Good Day, an High Day, a Day known to the Lord, a Day of the Son of Man, a Day of His espousals and of the gladness of His heart. And it comes on the Eighth day, counting from this day last week, and the day after, and the day after that, and so on; every Eighth day *and forward*, as Ezekiel says, chapter xliii, 27; that is, it comes To-day, and To-morrow, and the Third day—each day, even all the days, till time shall be no more: and then it will be For-ever-and-for-ever.

The Daisies

He counts the number of the stars;
He names them every one.
Great is our Lord and of great power;
His wisdom search can none.

Psalm cxlvii. 4.

SOMEONE has somewhere told a story more or less to this effect: A good many years ago the guests at a country house were talking at the breakfast table about the number of birds that found a lodging in a big tree near the window.

"There are six thousand seven hundred and ninety-three," said a young man in the company.

"How many did you say, sir?" asked Mr. Gladstone in a chilling, disapproving tone.

That statesman's sense of humour was evidently not at its best that day. Most people would have welcomed the remark, and let us hope the hostess, or some other who was present, helped to put the young man at his ease by a word or look of thanks for his fresh and merry contribution to the conversation. Of course 6,793 was a gross exaggeration, but, as the Bible itself shows us in many places, there is no sin in a playful exaggeration, or in one that neither misleads nor is meant to mislead the listener. When God said to Jacob, for example, that his seed was to be as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude, that is not to be taken as literally true. I suppose a few railway truckfuls of sand would contain a number of grains much greater than all the people that have ever lived. It is simply a

strong, vivid way of putting things that deceives no one, and is quite a different kind of exaggeration from that with which we are familiar in the talk of a liar, or a boaster, or the man whom we describe as habitually inaccurate.

* * * *

One Saturday afternoon a short time ago two neighbours were discussing and comparing their fruits and flowers and vegetables across their garden wall, for a garden wall is a great bond of union between friendly people. One of the two had this, that, and the other thing, that his neighbour hadn't, or had not in as great profusion.

"Ah, well," said the other in great good humour, "just look at my lawn! Have you as many daisies as me? Say the word and I can give you 30,000, and I'll have more than that left!"

The two men parted laughing. But on the Monday, which was a holiday—I forget what for, there are so many holidays now—they foregathered again.

"I was telling my family at tea-time on Saturday night about your offer of 30,000 daisies, and we all agreed that while you are the most generous man in that line we have ever met, you are also no mean exaggerator! Do you stick to your 30,000?"

"Yes, I do, though I confess that if I had thought my words were to be reported and weighed, I might have been not quite so generous in my estimate."

"Well, we say that though you have about

the best show in the daisy line we have ever seen, if all the sheep and camels and oxen and she-asses that Job had before his troubles came on him—we were reading about them last night—were to pass along the road there, you couldn't give them one daisy apiece ! "

" Well, I know he had twice as many at the end of the book as he had at the beginning, but how many he had *then* I can't say I remember. I must look it up, but it's less than 30,000, I suppose ? "

" A great deal less, but one of my little girls is coming over to count the daisies, with your leave, and we'll see who came nearest the exact number, and the one that was furthest from it will give her a farthing for every thousand or fraction of a thousand that he was wrong."

" And I'm quite agreeable, and it won't beggar either of us."

* * * *

It was after eleven when one of the girls, her share of the household work being done, came over to do her task. It was a lovely summer day, and the daisies were looking their best with their freckly faces and their white and " crimson-tippit " ruffs sticking out more nobly than Queen Elizabeth's in all her glory.

The lawn was twenty yards square, and I never saw one whiter, except one—of all places in the world—at the back of the archery ground at St. John's College, Oxford. They used to say that if a daisy showed its head in the lawn there, the whole college were summoned to expel the intruder there and then.

The little girl brought a cup with her and the penny ruler, twelve inches long, with which she ruled the lines when she did her sums. Then she marked out, like an ancient Roman augur, her *templum*, or field of observation, one foot square. And then she proceeded to count the little stars one by one. And what a fright her father got! There were a hundred-and-fifty-and-four. He was evidently "in" for it, like the man who made the deal, in the old story, in the nails in a horse's shoes.

"Tell us quick how many that is," he said like a man on the brink of ruin.

"20 yards x 20 = 400, and as there are 9 square feet in one square yard, 400 x 9 = 3,600. Multiply 154 by 3,600, and you get 554,400!"

"Who's the exaggerator now?" said the owner of the lawn. "And what about Job's cattle? Run in and get a Bible, and we'll see how much your father owes you." "7,000 sheep, and 3,000 camels, and 500 yoke of oxen, that's 1,000, two in a yoke, and 500 she-asses; 11,500."

"Then if I gave your father 30,000, how many would there remain for every one of Job's beasts?"

"45 each, and 69 over."

"Yet you all called me an exaggerator! But how many farthings does your father owe you? We'll have to check your figures this time, for this is a serious business."

"He was 542,000 wrong. 543 farthings — eleven shillings and threepence three farthings."

"Your father didn't bargain for that! But you must let me pay five shillings of it—for in truth I was nearly as far wrong as he was—and I

meant to give you five shillings anyway for your 'fairing,' and that will be one and threepence three farthings to spend on your mother and brothers and sisters, and ten shillings to add to your bank-book, and it will be a lesson to you all, and especially to your father, to be a little less inaccurate, and never to accuse other people of exaggerating when they don't deserve it!"

* * * *

When the little girl ran in and told the result, her mother laughed heartily, but it was the 154 that struck her most. "I wish it had been 153, for I have always liked that number ever since our minister preached on it. 'Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three.' He said that when we buy big quantities we get one or two thrown into the bargain in case there should be a mistake in the counting, or lest any of them should be bad. But though Christ could make no mistake in counting, He added an extra one to every fifty just because He likes to give, and He always gives good measure. But it would have been nice if there had been only 153 daisies."

"But," said the little girl, "what if God said, 'They will be expecting the three extra, but I will make it four, just to go beyond their expecting?'"

* * * *

The girl's father and mother asked their bachelor neighbour to take tea with them in the garden that afternoon, and the talk was all about

daisies. Was it not a wonderful thing that in that little bit of ground there should be more than half a million flowers of one kind alone, all opening up their forty or fifty petals whenever the sun shone, putting on their little crowns when he put on his? And if there is all that, and who knows how much more? in 20 yards by 20, how much must there be in the great round world, and in those other worlds that circle with it round the sun! "In His temple everything saith, Glory."

And those hundreds of thousands of flowers that God tended so lovingly and arrayed so gloriously we cut down, in the fulness of their life and beauty, in one brief hour, without a thought.

"Broken Lights of Thee"

Love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.—1 John iv. 7.

Willie Webster was never out of mischief. So his father and mother said, and as they belonged to what we call "the old school," they thrashed him soundly at least once every lawful day, and generally thrice on Saturdays and other holidays. Mrs. Woolridge, their neighbour, often protested against this, and would argue with them on the point.

"I grant you," she would say, "that Willie often makes mistakes, and he blunders very badly indeed, as he did last Tuesday when he loosened Nero's chain, but that's a very different thing from trying to do mischief. He thought the dog was hurting itself. Willie, like all of us when we come into the world, has everything to learn. You may be sure he won't make that mistake again. But I don't call that mischief. He wished to make the dog happy, and I think all the more of him for what he did. And believe me, Mrs. Webster, a mistake that is made in love will always, in the end, turn out well. And anything and everything that is done out of a pure and loving heart will get a blessing, for God Himself is love, and He is only too well pleased to see us trying to be like Him."

But Mrs. Webster couldn't see that, and still less could her husband, for he thought himself a great theologian and was, therefore, a very

ignorant man, and as for Mrs. Woolridge—why, she was English and what more need be said? Didn't the Bible say that a sin was a sin even if done unwittingly?

"But if there is love, even though it be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, won't God have respect to the love?"

"The Bible says nothing about love like a mustard seed, Mrs. Woolridge, and you ought to know that."

"True, but it says it about faith, and aren't faith and love the same?"

* * * *

There is no doubt Willie did things that were a little trying at times. Would you like to hear some of them? A garden is a fine place for the display of ignorance alike in word and deed. So much we owe to our first parents' eating of the tree of knowledge.

Mr. Webster had a garden, and Willie, hearing his father say one Friday evening in October that he hoped to finish his strawberry beds to-morrow—he was clearing out some rows of old useless plants—rose next morning as soon as it was light and set to work. When his father came home at breakfast time, Willie, he found, had dug up the six rows that had been planted the year before. And they were plants, too, from a famous Surrey garden, each plant warranted good, in its second year, for a pound weight of the loveliest berries one ever saw even in one's dreams! And further, in delving the border alongside the wall with the southern exposure,

he had pulled up and thrown into the burn ten useless-looking twigs, which he did not know were slips off black currant bushes, sent five weeks before, after long promise, by a friend a hundred and fifty miles away. Prize-winning berries from these bushes had actually been photographed for a florist's catalogue.

There was the water-barrel exploit, too. That took place at a farm to which he had gone for milk, and the time was the morning after a night of rain, the first rain that had fallen for six weeks. Willie had, as we say, a straight eye in his head, and seeing that the tap or stop-cock had been fixed in squint—and it was leaking, too—determined to put it right, and succeeded only in half-emptying the barrel. That he was drenched to the skin besides, and that a hen and its brood of seven were nearly drowned, were but minor considerations in the farmer's eyes in such a time of drought.

There was the day, too, in late autumn, when, hearing someone say there couldn't be a finer wind for drying things, he opened the big gate at the foot of Captain Edson's garden to give the wind free course. And the wind blew and blew all night, and when morning came the poor Captain found that the cartloads of leaves he had been gathering for weeks to make leaf-mould had been swept clean off his premises and into a field belonging to a retired lawyer with whom he was not on speaking terms.

And there was the eight-day clock, too, that hadn't gone wrong five minutes in a year as long as its history was known. And Willie, one

Saturday, when his mother was unusually busy, bent on polishing the brass disc of the pendulum, unscrewed the nut that kept it in its place, and then in replacing it unhooked the pendulum. The fixing of it up again, and the dusting of the works, took up two precious hours at night, and made the household lose their weekly walk. Worse still, the clock has never been the same again, and now, like a creature of large discourse, looks both before and after, and goes fast and slow, rivalling in the uncertainty of its movements the most inconsistent of the five clocks in the neighbouring town that get their inspiration from Greenwich once every day.

* * * *

Not one of these mistakes, as one can see, was caused by love of mischief, or by aught else than a wish to do other people good. And being the result of love, some of them at least, as Mrs. Woodridge said, had soon a happy issue. I daresay all of them had that, if only one knew everything.

Here are two instances. Mr. Webster was happy in having a master who loved to call with his wife on the men whom he employed. "We ought to be one family," he used to say. Well, happening to stroll into Mr. Webster's garden a few days after Willie had pulled up the black-currant slips, he noticed the bareness of the wall, and said, "That's too good a place to leave empty. If you have nothing better in your mind, would you let me send you a young Victoria plum? It should bear fruit in a year or two."

That plum tree like charity will cover a multitude of sins.

And there was the clock achievement. Willie learned a good deal that night, though he got his whipping first. When, therefore, a month afterwards, Sir Humphry Balmain, K.C.M.G., from New Zealand, looked in at the public school, and offered, with the teacher's consent, a prize of five shillings to the boy or girl in the three highest standards who should within an hour write the best essay on one of these three subjects : " A Visit to the Exhibition," " The Thoughts of an Eight-day Clock," or " Whether would you be an Elephant or a Whale if you had the choice ?" Willie took the second for his subject, though he was sorely tempted to try the third, and showed so much knowledge that Sir Richard was for withholding the prize from him till the teacher assured him that the boy's father was not a watchmaker, and that in writing his essay he had had no advantage over his fellow-competitors.

But it was another thing that happened that finally opened Mr. Webster's eyes to the truth of what his English neighbour had constantly affirmed—that love is love even though it makes mistakes, and will in no wise lose its reward.

* * * *

It was a bee that had strayed in through the open window one day, and had landed itself in difficulties. In his eagerness to help it—for the bee resisted him, having no doubt heard from some bird of the air an evil report concerning him—Willie broke a little hand-mirror of which

his mother was very fond. It was a hundred and ten years old, and had such a lovely inlaid border that more than one grand lady had offered her a whole half-crown for it. It had been part of the fittings of an old dressing-case, and was worth guineas—and they knew that, though Mrs. Webster didn't till her son told her ten years afterward the price he saw marked on one similar to it in an antique dealer's shop in Edinburgh.

Some months after it was broken, Mr. Webster was lying very ill of typhoid. It was the day of the crisis of his trouble. His wife had given up hope, and was sitting near his bed the image of despair. It was about half-past three in the afternoon, when suddenly the sun shone in at the window and fell on the broken looking-glass. How it was I am not mathematician enough to know, but the uneven surface broke up the light and made a double rainbow on the wall.

"Oh, there's a rainbow over your head!" she cried out in her astonishment before she knew it.

And just at that moment her husband opened his eyes. "What o'clock is it?" he said. And from that hour he began to amend.

He told the story afterwards. He was lying in a boat, he thought, and was drifting, drifting, drifting down a river. And the sky looked, oh, so black! And then he heard someone say, "There's a rainbow, and it's half-past three!" And the old lines he had learnt at school came into his mind:

" A rainbow in the morning
Is a shepherd's warning ;
But a rainbow at night
Is a shepherd's delight."

And that moment there seemed to come to him an access of hope and joy and strength.

" I'm thinking," he said to his wife, " that Mrs. Woolridge is perhaps right after all. Willie couldn't help it when he broke the looking-glass, and he was really meaning well at the time. He was trying to help a poor bee, and though he didn't know it, he was helping his poor father instead, though I have often been both to you and him an ill-natured wasp. We must ask Mrs. Woolridge in to explain it all over again to us, for I fear she knows more theology than either of us after all. And she's English ! and we're both Scotch ! "

Daft Bell

For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that He see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.—Deut. xxiii. 14.

Old Isobel Angus, or Daft Bell as her foolish neighbours called her, had a weekly income of about five shillings and eightpence ha'penny. A ha'penny means much when one comes to a certain point. Five shillings and eightpence ha'penny; and as she had God's blessing with it, and was generous as well as thrifty, she was well off. She had been in service till her sixtieth year, latterly as housekeeper to a gentleman, who, at his death, left her a small annuity. The rest of her income came from the interest at 3 per cent. which she got from the Savings Bank on the £140 she had put into it during the thirty years that had passed since her mother's death had left her homeless. She would have kept a lodger had she been able, after leaving service, but she had many ailments, and was now almost totally deaf, besides. Her mother had been hard of hearing for several years before her death, and fretful and inquisitive, and Bell had for a time a good deal to bear. No one else would have said it of her, but she had often charged herself with being impatient, and short in her answers, and the deafness that had come upon herself she looked on as a judgment for not honouring her mother. But she was wrong in that.

* * * *

When the factor told her there was a house of

one apartment on the first flat of an old tenement that she might have for £4 a year, or two shillings a week if she took it by the month, she wondered why God was so kind to her. But when she saw the house, she had a good cry. Its state was even worse than she had been told. The last two tenants, one of whom had £4 10s., and the other £3 15s., a fortnight, had not only flitted without paying any rent—for, as their wives said, they could hardly keep themselves in food on a small wage like that, let alone paying money to a greedy landlord—but had burnt everything burnable in the house, shelves, drawers, and the wooden bars on which the mattress, if they had had one, would have rested. "She could take the house as it stood if she wanted it," the factor said; "I'll put in drawers, and bed bars, and one shelf, but not one penny more will I lay out."

From the end of the "close," or entry, to the first flat was a short flight of four steps. There were four flats in the building, and three houses in each flat. Hers was the middle house.

* * * *

In this chapter I should have told you what she did to make the place habitable, but it was so sad a business, and she cried so much, that I have not the heart to tell the story.

* * * *

As soon as the inside was decent, she washed the door and polished the handle. It was black and smeared with I don't know how many things

when she began. When she was done, it shone like gold and nearly blinded some of the neighbours when they came on it suddenly. She had a weary task with the bar of wood in front of the door, but it, too, was made first presentable, then almost beautiful. But it took a lot of sandpaper as well as soap.

* * * *

Such a "close" for visitors you never did see! From morning to night there was always somebody asking if there was a Mrs. So-and-so in this land, and as Isobel's door was the only habitable-looking place on the first landing, it was at it all the callers knocked. It was not the number of these, however, that distressed her so much as her difficulty in hearing what they said. But seeing one day in a window a small slate for a penny, she bought it, varnished the sides, and then bribing one of the neighbours' children to write on it "1st flat, 2nd flat, 3rd flat, 4th flat," with the names of the tenants under each, she fixed it on her door with a screw-nail. That was how she got the name "Daft."

And now I should tell you how the boys spat on the slate, and wrote things, and drew her portrait on it, till at last she had to take it down. The factor, however, had heard of it, and seeing it was a good idea, put a little frame with the names of his tenants and a glass covering over it, at the front of each entry in some new tenements he was given the care of, and he got credit for being an uncommonly clever man!

* * * *

There were many other things that Isobel Angus did, but I have time to tell you only one. The tenants were bound to sweep their stair once every day, and to wash it twice a week. But as they said, when asked why they didn't wash their own and their children's faces a little oftener, what was the use of washing them ? they would be just as black again in half an hour's time.

But Daft Bell loved cleanliness, and not only swept the entry, and washed the landing and the four steps, faithfully when it was her own turn, but willingly, as she had the time to spare, swept and washed them for her neighbours, and not only twice a week, but once every day. She waited till after ten at night, and then in the morning everything was dry and as white as pipe-clay could make it. Of course it made her neighbours angry, and their boys had orders to make as great a mess with their feet at her door as they could, and they did it, and did it for months. But every morning everything was sweet and beautiful once more, and the boys began to be ashamed, and the girls used to bring out their mothers' besoms and sweep the pavement and play at tidying house, and before six months were gone the plague of cleanliness, as one woman put it, had infected every one of them so much that the look of the whole property was changed, and the factor felt justified in adding ten shillings to all their rents except Daft Bell's, and to hers he added a pound !

* * * *

But in God's reckoning that pound she lost had already gained ten.

John Duncan, Weaver and Botanist

I WONDER if any of you have read the life of this fine old specimen of a godly Scotsman? If not, you should try to see it, and read it.

His life was one sore struggle from beginning to end, but he never ceased seeking knowledge.

"I just took a notion to ken a'e plant by anither when I was rinning about the brae. I never saw a plant but I lookit for the marrows o't (that is, for others that were like it), and, as I had a gude memory, when I kent a floo'er aince I kent it ay." He learned to write after he was thirty. He had no watch, but only a pocket sun-dial which he made himself. His house—known by his neighbours as the philosopher's hall—was a loft under the sloping roof of a stable. His weekly expenditure was four shillings. He used to take wild flowers to church and spread them on the book-board before him from pure delight. In his old age, alas! he was compelled for a time to take help from the parish, but even then he gave up the coals that were allowed him to a poor imbecile whose necessity he considered greater than his own.

Though he loved plants all his days, and was regarded as a wonder in his own district by the people who were wise enough to understand him, it was only when he was an old man, about eighty, that his wonderful life became known to the world. Then people came from a distance to see his collection of plants and himself. One

day a lady from England visited him and saw and admired a rare specimen. She expressed a wish to have one, and as John was always delighted to serve anyone who "likit floo'rs" he set off the next day, frail old man as he was, on a twelve miles' journey to the nearest place where it was to be got. He was very short-sighted, and had almost to feel his plants, but he groped on till it grew dark. Then the rain came down and it turned out a wild night. He had worn the same suit in his poverty for fifty years, and to save his coat he took it off and folded it under his arm. He could not find his specimen, but he went in search of another rare plant that grew near there, feeling for it in a burn while he was drenched to the skin. Next day the plant was found, and he was ready for the return of his visitor. That rough night's work was too much for him; he never was the same again. And when we know what he did and how much it had cost him, we can surely understand how he felt when the lady never came back, never asked about her plant, possibly never thought about it more.

Is not that the way we all treat Christ? We ask Him to do things both for ourselves and others, and then we forget even that we prayed. We ask Him to save the world, and He sends out brave missionaries, many of whom shorten their lives answering our prayers, working for the coming of God's kingdom, and then we take no interest in them. They come home to rest a little and be encouraged, and we won't go out to hear them speak because it is, perhaps, a wet evening and we have a cold. We forget that

God could not give us anything we pray for if He had not been loving us and working for us from all eternity. The very food we eat is given to us because Christ died, and that is the reason we ask a blessing and give thanks to God whenever we sit down to eat our daily bread. Christ came a long, long road, and was weary with His journey, and all for you and me.

Pelōni Almōni

PELŌNI ALMŌNI is the name of a young Robin, and this is how he got it.

This last summer there was another Robin that came to our window now and again at breakfast-time and made its way to our table. There it would dance about, for a minute or two, and then, having made a sudden dab at the butter, would dart out of the window, only to be back in a little for another sweet, or rather another salt, morsel. This, however, one could not help noticing and approving; unlike rabbits which never finish any turnip they begin to, but go from one to another, taking a bit out of each, the Robin always attacked the same little pat.

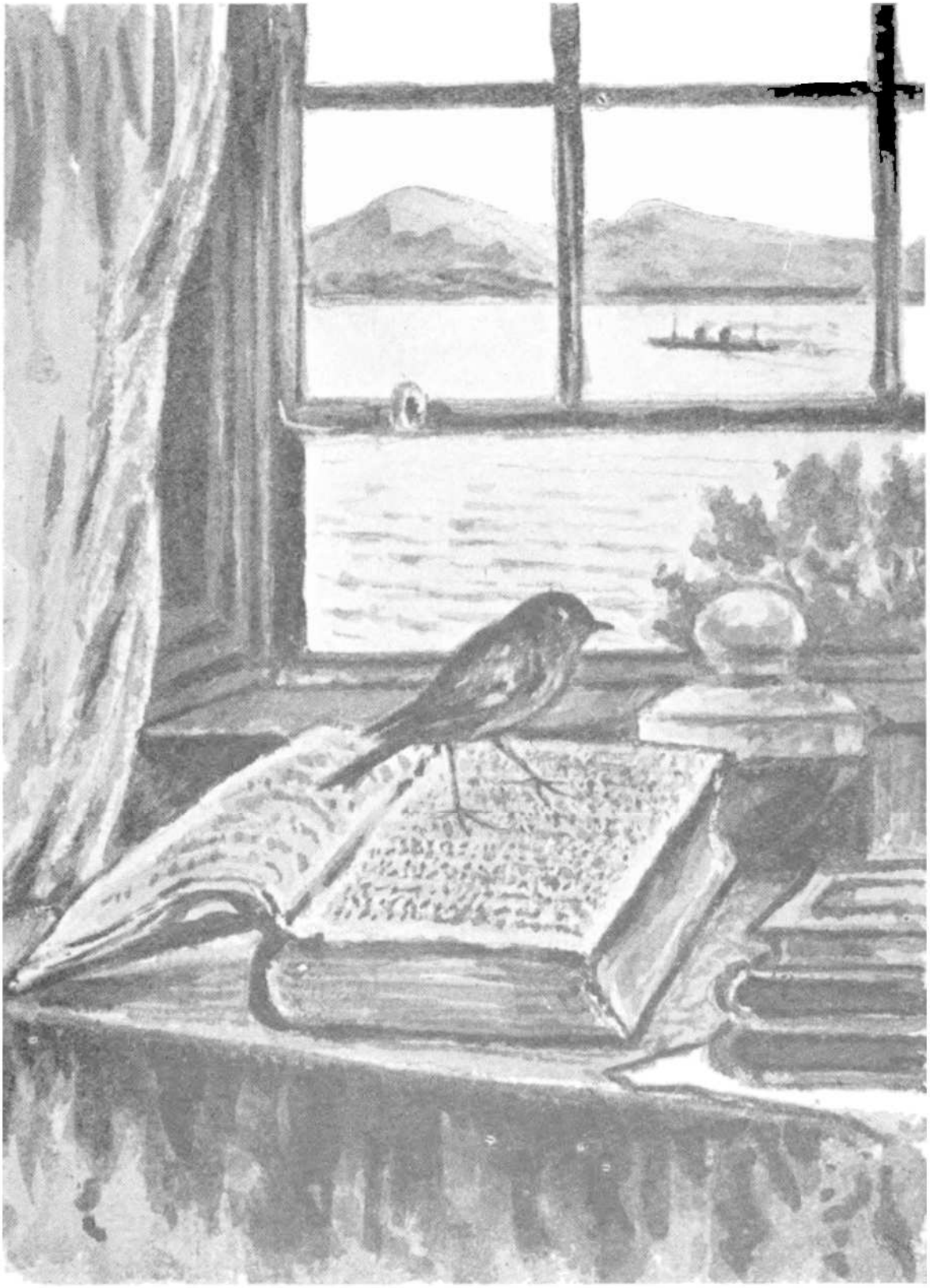
It was an object of much interest to any guests we had, and specially to some friends from America. One of these was so delighted with our little visitor that I introduced him formally to it in these words :

" Master Cock Robin, allow me to introduce to you Dr. McFeeters of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A." Whereupon Dr. McFeeters with a kindly ceremonious bow and a delightful Amurrican accent, which I wish I could reproduce in type, replied, " I am pleased to make your acquaintance, sir ! "

Unhappily, a few days afterwards, it paid us its last visit. Like Noah's dove it returned not again unto us any more. Why, I do not know. Perhaps some evil beast devoured it. Perhaps

it has gone to some winter resort. Perhaps it has found an open window elsewhere and a host whose butter it prefers to ours. Or, perhaps, and still more probably, it has retired from business—at least in our neighbourhood—and has transferred us, as doctors do with their patients, to its successor. For, sure enough, another Robin, a bird of this year, in good liking, well favoured and fat fleshed, has begun to call on us. It paid its first visit on a Sabbath morning, and in this wise. My Hebrew Dictionary was lying open on a table near the window—I don't say, however, one would always find it there !—and there was Master Robin standing on the open page. When it flew away, I went to see what word it had been looking at, and strangely enough, there was the mark of one of its little feet at the word *Almōni !*

Now that word is a very curious one; for it means *unnamed*, and it always goes, they say, with another word—*Pelōni*—which means *a certain one*. Pelōni Almōni is the way a Hebrew addressed a man whose name he either did not know or did not wish to give, just as we would say to a stranger, *Hi ! you there !* or *I say, Mister !* It is the phrase which is translated in Ruth iv. 1, *Ho, such a one !* You remember who it was to whom Boaz said it. It was the man who was so anxious to preserve his own name lest he should mar his own inheritance, that he refused to marry Ruth, the woman whom God had chosen to be the ancestress according to the flesh of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And after all, his name and fame are perished utterly.



" PELŌNI ALMŌNI "

Why did the Robin take his stand at that word Almōni? Was it only a chance, as the Philistines would have said, that happened to us? Or did it mean to shake the dust off its feet for a testimony against Ruth's cruel nearest kinsman? Or did it wish us to understand that it had found rest for the sole of its foot and had come to stay? and that—though this would imply that it knew two languages—it claimed board and *alimony* at our hands? Or did it mean to say, "To you I am only a little stranger, you know neither my name nor history, and at best I shall soon pass out of your memory, but neither I nor any other Robin is ever forgotten before God"?

Mr. Darwin tells us that in the mud that was sticking to one bird's foot he found the seeds of no less than 82 separate plants. I have no doubt that in our little Robin's dust there is much that I have missed. I have surveyed but little of the land its foot has trodden on. But be that as it may, we have named him Pelōni, and have infeffed him into all the rights and privileges of the stranger and the fatherless.

Old Mr. Dinwoodie

And the Lord God planted a garden.—Gen. ii. 8.

Old Mr. Peter Dinwoodie had been a fine workman in his day, slow a little, but sure. He was once, only once, late during his whole life. He awoke regularly, with the precision of a time-gun, at five o'clock, and rose at ten minutes past. But this once he slept in till five minutes to six and was twenty-five minutes late. How or why it happened he never could understand. His fellow workmen, not one of whom would ever have received a full week's pay if the patent time-checking clocks we now have in public works had been invented then, never allowed him to forget it, and the memory both amused and nettled him.

Opposition masters tempted him with offers of higher wages, but, though he had no reason to love the master he had, he thought it unkind to leave a sinking ship, and so stayed on and on while his master clung to old-fashioned methods till the works had to be closed, and old Peter at the age of seventy-two was thrown idle. He and his wife, however, had saved over three hundred pounds, and the blessing that had been with them while they made it continued when they began to spend it.

They went to live in the outskirts of a town in the west, in a little cottage that stood near the public road which led from the pier to the sea-shore. The road struck inland for nearly a mile

and then went seaward again, the ground between it and the shore for nearly two miles being shut off by a wall eight feet high which enclosed a nobleman's park. There was a lodge at each end, and two gates for carts, but woe betide the man who ventured in unless on business!

The old couple could not help noticing how fond most holiday-makers were of flowers. They could see children waving a few weeds, dandelions even sometimes, in triumph as they made for the pier on their return. "Why should we not pull some of our flowers and leave them on the dyke by the roadside for them?" said Mrs. Dinwoodie one day.

"Aye, and why did you not think of that sooner, good wife?"

So from that day onwards, all through the spring and summer and autumn months, and specially on Saturdays and Mondays they stuck "flowers in the crannied wall." They were, I daresay, very common flowers, but the common ones are the prettiest, lilies, and daffodils, and pansies, and violas, and sweet peas, and roses, and carnations. A dozen times a day the old man would replace them with new ones as they disappeared, managing it so cleverly that hardly anybody ever saw him do it. It was hard work, too, and many a time he would affect to chide his wife, telling her it was fair killing him supplying the whole of the west and south of Scotland with flowers. But it was delightful work and grew more and more delightful every year. At first it was only single flowers they stuck in the wall, but as their stock increased they made little posies.

What about the people who passed by? Many, strange to say, never saw them at all! Some would stand and look and then pass on. Others wondered how the flowers grew in the wall! Many took them timidly, half expecting a policeman to pounce out on them. Some would lift every one they saw, and some would pull the heads off and throw them on the ground, evidently thinking they had done a clever thing.

One day in the Free Library, in an old volume of *Punch*, Mr. Dinwoodie saw a sketch of a railway waiting-room, on whose wall a little box for tracts had been put, with the words above it: "Please take one." The box was empty, but all unconsciously three unmarried ladies had seated themselves immediately under it! Mr. Dinwoodie got a good laugh, but he got a new idea, too, and took it home with him, and made several little boxes and printed on them: "Please take one or two." His boxes were sometimes broken, sometimes stolen, but driftwood was plentiful and he just made more.

Sometimes he stooped behind the dyke and enjoyed hearing what people said, but he never felt quite happy doing that. He liked best to come along the road with his wife when it was about time for the last boat, and meet children with flowers he recognized, or see lads and lassies choosing for "buttonholes," after many trials, the colours that they thought best became them.

Once a kind-hearted woman left a penny in the box; and once somebody wrote "Thank you" on it, and once some other wrote on a piece

of paper, "Thank you kindly, whoever you are."

But the greatest compliment was paid him after he was dead. A young married woman had the little cottage then, and one day there came up the road to it a handsome young couple. The man introduced himself as an engineer home on furlough from Bombay and five weeks married. "And," said he, "my wife and I thought we would like to come and see the place where we became engaged five years ago. It was at the foot of the road there. There were some flowers sticking in the dyke and we pulled out two of them, a white rose and a red one, and we have them yet. I just heard a little ago in the village that it was an old man and his wife who lived here who used to put flowers there, and I'm sorry to learn they are both dead. I would have liked to thank him."

"That was Mr. Dinwoodie."

"Dinwoodie! What a queer name!"

"Aye, it's a queer name, and some folks that didna like the old man and his wife used to call them 'Dune Bodies' instead; you see they were jealous of them, and said they put flowers there for a show-off."

"Aye, you would be surprised," said the woman, "how many people come and ask about them. The garden was taken from us by the factor when we came, but lots of people come and say they used to get flowers here on the holiday when they were little, and my weans say if ever we have a garden they'll do what old Mr. Dinwoodie did."

Apple Dumplings

The lady who gave lessons in cookery in a Board School in Leith used to say that little Elsie Vert was as good as a paid assistant. She came from somewhere near Haddington, and being an orphan lived with her aunt. She was the best sewer in the school, though not the best knitter—Maggie Young could beat her at that, but then Maggie had taken to knitting almost as soon as she could walk, and was supposed to be able to knit all night while she was sleeping ! Elsie, further, was always singing, and was good at all games. But she liked best to play at being schoolmistress. One day when she was giving the children " palmies " with a linen rag, she saw a girl standing a little way off, looking as if she too would like to play. Her she conquered instantly by bidding the two wildest girls in her class "go and fetch that wicked girl that is playing truant." The truant got six palmies, and felt greatly uplifted at being told to think shame of herself.

The stranger was little Mary Macneish, who had come to spend a fortnight at the end of August with her married sister. Her father was a roadman in Argyllshire, and she had other two sisters at service in Edinburgh. It was said that when the old man bade each of them good-bye when they were leaving home, the last thing he did was to pray on the roadside with them :

" O God, if my lassies should ever forget Thee, Thou art not to forget them."

The last three days before Mary returned home, Elsie gave the children lessons in cookery. Some workmen were digging a " found " for a new building, and turned up some rare soft clay. They had to cut down a big tree, too, and when Elsie saw the young green chestnuts she knew she had everything she needed for a lesson in the making of apple dumplings. There were plenty of planks for tables, different kinds of sand would do for the baking-powder, and the sugar and the suet and the pinch of salt. A piece of narrow drain-pipe which they found in an adjoining field made a splendid rolling-pin, and pieces of brown paper which they affected to wring out of hot water and dust with flour were the pudding-cloths, and the chestnuts, cut up of course, made beauty apples. Then they boiled the dumplings in an imaginary pot for two hours, and it was wonderful how quickly these two hours went. Three days, as I have said, they played that game, with fitting intervals, to the delight of Mary and the amusement of the men, and not less to the annoyance of the wives of some of them when their husbands hinted that, much as they preferred boiled tea as a fine strengthening and refreshing meal—and indeed they questioned if their stomachs now could digest any other kind of food—yet they would try to put up with a dumpling once in two years or so; it would show their children that their mothers were as clever as the School Board teachers with their big salaries, and it would silence some of their newly

married fellow-workmen with their two and three courses every day, who were always boasting about their wives' good cookery.

* * * *

"I always take some of these to distribute on the road," said Mrs. Bunce-Lee, pointing to a heap of tracts and penny booklets, as she was preparing to go out in the 950 guinea motor-car her husband had given her on her thirtieth birthday.

"Do you mean that you toss them out as you fly past people on the road?" said a Scotch minister who formed one of her party of four.

"Yes; and don't you approve of that?"

"Most certainly not," was his answer. "I heard you quoting from *Aylmer's Field* last night. Don't you remember Tennyson's description of Edith?

> "For she—so lowly-lovely and so loving,
> Queenly responsive when the loyal hand
> Rose from the clay it worked in as she passed,
> Not sowing hedgerow texts and passing by,
> Nor dealing goodly counsel from a height
> That makes the lowest hate it, but a voice
> Of comfort and an open hand of help,
> A splendid presence flattering the poor roofs
> Revered as theirs, but kindlier than themselves
> To ailing wife or wailing infancy
> Or old bedridden palsy—was adored.

"I think if you claim the right to speak to a man about his soul, you should give him the chance to answer you; such intimate dealing should not be simply for a moment, or all on one

side. If you are really his friend, you should be prepared to show yourself friendly."

"You don't mean, of course, that I'm to stand and talk to him and then give him a sixpence?"

"Oh, no! unless you find that a sixpence is the thing he most needs. But if you throw a man a tract, why not wrap an apple or a pear in it? I think I heard you say you have more apples this year than you know what to do with!"

All this was said kindly and with a smile, for the minister was an old friend of the family and knew whom he was talking to, and Mrs. Bunce-Lee showed her good sense by adopting the suggestion. A basket of apples was sent for, and after a little more delay the motor-car leapt off on its journey as if even it felt the lighter for its new freight. Mrs. Bunce-Lee herself that day found a new pleasure in tract-distributing, and owned, after they had gone five and twenty miles, that for the first time in her experience every tract she had thrown out had been picked up and looked into!

* * * *

"Father and mother and my little sister and brother went away to Edinburgh at six this morning, and won't be back till after nine, and I stayed at home to keep the house and look after the hens and the pig. It's the first jaunt my father and mother have had since they were married." This, and much more in answer to questions that were put, did little Mary Macneish tell the grand lady who halted in her motor-car as she drove past the roadman's house. "Here is an apple

for each of them and two for yourself, and a little book to read," said Mrs. Bunce-Lee; "it was good of you to stay at home and let your mother away for a day."

Half an hour after, the butcher's van that called once a week stopped at the cottage. The man wanted a drink and Mary gave him it, and showed him the apples which she had polished and set in a row. She offered him one of them. "No, thank you kindly, Mary," he said, "but I'll tell you what. These apples would be the better of being kept a week or two—unless your mother could make a dumpling of them. I'll give you a little piece of suet if you think she could manage it."

Mrs. Macneish was a fine baker, but Mary had never seen her mother make an apple dumpling—they had more to do with their money than buy apples—but—for a great idea had entered Mary's mind—she thought a dumpling could easily be managed, and so she joyfully accepted the vanman's gift.

Then she washed her hands and set to; she pared and cored the apples and put them in water to keep them from turning brown, and minced the suet and made the paste, forgetting nothing that Elsie Vert had told her. She then searched out a clean bit of old towelling, and wrung it out of hot water, dusted it with flour, and finished it all off and tied it neatly with a string. She had it ready to put into the pot for three hours' boiling, when back came the motor-car on its return journey.

Mrs. Bunce-Lee only meant to ask if Mary was

not feeling lonely, but question followed question, and then everything came out, to that lady's great amazement and delight.

But I think Mary's father was happier than any other that night. He had seen his little grandson for the first time, and had been pleased beyond words to find how much respected by their mistresses his daughters were. No wonder he turned the blessing he asked at supper into a prayer of thanksgiving. But when after the tea was poured out Mary produced the dumpling which she had kept not only warm but hidden, he laughed outright and said, "You are just your mother over again, as clever and as tricky, every bit."

Mrs. Bunce-Lee has taken a great notion to Scotch servants, and has made Mrs. Macneish promise that as soon as Mary is ready for a situation she is to come to her place in Cheshire. There is a Presbyterian church only a mile off, to which her head gardener, a Scotsman, and two of his assistants go, and Mary will go with them. The minister is a good old man, and a most earnest and interesting preacher. Indeed she sometimes goes herself to hear him.

I should have liked to tell you about Mrs. Bunce-Lee's younger sister, Lady Davies Hinde, and her four charming children, and especially about Llewellyn the baby. It would take too long, but this I must tell you. The sisters have been talking, and as a result Llewellyn's mother has motored lately three times to visit a certain house in Leith, and she has solemnly affirmed she will not leave Scotland till she has secured the

little girl who lives there to be her under-nurse-maid.

"You see," she said to her husband, "a clever father is no good to children unless they have a clever mother, for 'two are better than one,' and unfortunately that is what you haven't given ours. But the next best thing is a wise nurse."

"Well, my dear," said her husband, "do as you think best, though I don't agree with you in all that you have said. And you should have finished your quotation, 'Two are better than one, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.' What with such a father, and—pardon me for saying it—*such a mother*, and such a prodigy of a nurse as this Elsie Vert, I am a little afraid we are rather overdoing it!"

The Two Robins

One of the Robins was very ill. He was thinner than he looked, for his feathers were somewhat puffed out. But his eye was getting dim. The mist of death was coming on him. He was dying of cold and hunger.

It was during the terrible frost of February.

> "Birds lay here, and birds lay there,
> With little feathers all astare."

The second Robin was as pert and plump as could be. His little red waistcoat was extended to its utmost capacity, and well for him it was not fastened with buttons, for no buttons, as they are generally sewed on, could have stood the strain. No dimness about his eyes.

"Yes," he was saying, "everybody is complaining about the frost. For my part, I was never in finer condition in my life. I call it seasonable weather. I have not lost a meal. I don't know why people grumble so much. I was looking at myself in a bit of ice this morning. I am sure I never looked better. I go to seventy-three windows six times a day. Not that I know what seventy-three means. I can count as well as any in my family, but I can't go beyond six. I don't see the need of any more arithmetic. But I heard a man say there were seventy-three windows in that street in the village, and I go to every one of them. And whether there is food or not, I tap at the window and chirp, and people

say, 'Oh, there is that pretty Robin again'; so sometimes I get two meals at once. I don't go with the other birds, and that lets me get everything that's going all to myself. Chirp! chirp! I find that's the best plan; if one doesn't look after oneself, who is to do it? Ta-ta! old boy, only you shouldn't look quite so glum. But I'm feeling peckish a bit. I haven't tasted a morsel of anything for I am sure nearly five minutes. It's exhausting when one has to do all the speaking oneself. Ta-ta! chirp, chirp!"

Next morning the other bird was dead. That was the word that came to the birds who had gathered for that day's meal in our old doctor's lawn. There were tom-tits, and gulls, and crows, and sparrows, and mavises, and starlings, and many more besides.

"I see no sign of a change," said an old, old Crow; "I doubt if I'll live to see a change. Nineteen deaths last night, and the frost as keen as ever, and no food to be got."

"There were three ravens sat on a tree,
Down, a down, hey down, hey down;
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
With a down;
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
They were as black as they might be,
With a down, derrie, derrie, down.

The one of them said to his mate
Where shall we our breakfast take?"

"But it's seasonable weather," said the plump Robin, who had just risen from his ninth breakfast.

"Nineteen deaths," said the Crow again, "I fear I shall be the twentieth."

"No," said the Tom-tit; "old Robin Goodfellow is the twentieth; he died this morning."

"Then all the birds fell a-sighing and a-sobbing,
As they thought of the death of poor Cock-Robin."

The old doctor now threw out two trayfuls of crumbs and bones, but none of the birds, with the exception of the Robin, had any heart to eat.

For Robin Goodfellow had fallen a martyr to hard work and unselfishness. For three weeks he had scoured the village and the country, seeking morsels for other birds, telling each one where something suitable to him might be found. Many a quarrel he had stopped by a merry jest and the gift of the one mouthful he had reserved for himself. He had been provider to the whole bird community, and had sung loudest when he was most hungry. And now that he was gone the birds all saw how little attention they had paid to him. They had judged him by themselves, and thought that one who gave away so much must have at least more than enough for himself.

The most of that forenoon they spent recalling his good deeds. One thing threw light upon another. There were things even which had provoked them which they now saw he had done only for their good, and done wisely.

Meantime the other Robin had secured other fifteen meals. He had seen his own portrait, too, very distinctly in several windows, and was not only plumper but vainer and more selfish than ever. When he got back to the

doctor's garden, on his way to the doorstep of Granny Webster, who gave him every day almost the half of what she had to herself, "for he must be very hungry when he is willing to eat what I can give him," she said, the old Crow was still there, breathing very heavily, and evidently nearing his end. I don't know what he was thinking about, but this I am sure of, that, if God is with birds when they are dying, and He says He is, He is not there for nothing, and the thoughts He puts into their little minds must be worthy of One Who is excellent in counsel and wonderful in working. Maybe the birds never praise Him more than when they are passing through the valley of the shadow of death.

The Robin was annoyed at not being taken notice of. He hopped about and displayed his plumage at every possible angle. But still the Crow was unobservant of him.

At last, unable to stand the silence longer, he said, "I say, old Crow, don't you sometimes wish you had been a Robin?"

"Yes," said the dying bird, and these were his last words, "I could have wished well to be a Robin, *if only I could have been like the Robin that is dead.*"

"Bunch"

A certain centurion's servant who was dear unto him.—Luke vii. 2.

O Lord God of my master, I pray Thee, show kindness unto my master.—Gen. xxiv. 12.

SYDNEY SMITH was a minister of the Church of England, who died in 1845. He was one of the wittiest and most humorous of men, both as a talker and a writer; and he did a great deal of good in his day. It was he who wrote the story of "Mrs. Partington," the imaginary foolish woman who battled with the Atlantic and tried to sweep it back with a mop. He was a great giver of nicknames, and yet so kindly was his wit that he was always more loved than feared.

His four draught-oxen were Tug and Lug, Haul and Crawl. His first horse was Peter the Cruel, so called from the look on its face; but his most famous one was Calamity, which seemed to grow thinner the more it ate.

"Bunch" was his butler, though her real name was Annie Kay.

When Sydney Smith began his ministry, he was very poor. His glebe consisted of three hundred acres of the stiffest clay land in a remote part of Yorkshire. His manse was a hovel of two apartments, in so dangerous a condition that its previous tenant had declined to live in it any longer. The land would not let, and so Mr. Smith had to turn farmer. There was no house to live in, and so he became his own

architect and builder. His furniture was made out of a cartload of deals by a carpenter who had come to him to beg. Too poor to send his children to school, he educated his sons himself, while his wife taught his daughters. A servant was necessary, but a trained one would have cost too much, so he caught up a little garden-girl, "made like a milestone," named her Bunch, put a napkin in her hand and made her his butler. His daughter taught her to read, his wife to wait, while he himself took charge of her morals; and Bunch became the best butler in the county.

A lady who once visited him told afterwards that as she was coming downstairs one morning with her host, he suddenly said to Bunch, who happened to be passing, "Bunch, do you like roast duck or boiled chicken?"

Bunch had never tasted either one or the other in her life, but she answered without a moment's hesitation, "Roast duck, please, sir," and then passed on. The lady laughed. "You may laugh," was his answer, "but you have no idea of the labour it cost me to give her that decision of character. The Yorkshire peasantry are the quickest and shrewdest in the world, but you can never get a direct answer from them. If you ask them even their own names they will scratch their head and say, "A's sure ai don't knaw, sir," but I have brought Bunch to such perfection that she never hesitates now on any subject, however difficult. I am very strict with her. Would you like to hear her repeat her crimes? She has them by heart and repeats them every day.

"Come here, Bunch," he called out to her. "Come and repeat your crimes to this lady." So Bunch, a clean, fair, squat, tidy little girl about ten or twelve years of age, quite as a matter of course, as grave as a judge, without the least hesitation, and with a loud voice, began to repeat, "Plate snatching, gravy spilling, door slamming, blue-bottle fly catching, and curtsy bobbing." "Explain to the lady what blue-bottle fly catching is." "Standing with my mouth open and not attending, sir." "And what is curtsy bobbing?" "Curtsying to the centre of the earth, please, sir." "Good girl; now you may go."

Annie became in time nurse, lady's-maid, housekeeper, apothecary's assistant—for her master had often to doctor his parishioners—factotum and friend. She was called into consultation on every family event, and proved herself, in the words of Lady Holland, her master's daughter, "a worthy oracle." Her counsels were delivered in the softest voice, with the sweetest smile and in the broadest Yorkshire. She ended by nursing her old master through his long and painful illness night and day. She was with him at his death. She followed him to his grave; she was remembered in his will; she survived him but two years, which she spent in his widow's house; and after a long and faithful service of thirty years was buried near her master, honoured and lamented by all his family.

The Silent Tent

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD'S GLORY

Jesus therefore said unto them, Children, have ye aught to eat? They answered Him, No.—John xxi. 5 (R.V.).

Hath God forgotten to be gracious?—Ps. lxxvii. 9.

As one reads of the death of Captain Scott and his comrades, Edgar Evans, Lawrence Oates, Edward Wilson and Henry Bowers, strange thoughts about God and about God's love come into one's mind. There were two bands of men, one under Captain Scott, one under Captain Amundsen, into whose heart God had put the love of knowledge and the desire for fame, and one band was taken, the other left. With one He dealt so tenderly; against the other He bent His bow and caused all the arrows of His quiver to enter into them. While these brave Norwegians were returning rejoicing with unbroken ranks, our countrymen were battling a few hundred miles away with fierce winds and the snow and the hail, which God Himself has told us He has reserved against the day of battle and war. Death followed in their train, and when the three that were left had come within eleven miles of the hut where there was bread enough and to spare, and they had pitched their little tent once more—God shut them in.

Where was the Angel that once baked a cake upon the coals and bade the sleeping prophet arise and eat? Why did Christ, who kindled a

fire beside the sea of Galilee, not make a meal in whose strength they might have gone a day's march to their home? Lord, if Thou hadst been there, they had not died! Surely He, Who kept Moses and His Own Son alive for forty days, could have saved these men by one word of His power! Could He not have stayed His rough wind in the day of His east wind? Could He not have shielded these men in the hollow of His hand, or made His sun to shine, or watched with them one hour?

We do not well in charging God. He who called these men to pierce to the furthest bounds of day and night, and gave them heart and skill to prove that others had outrun them in the race, and yet that they themselves had reached the goal, was not unkind to them. He had given them enough of earthly fame; He was now preparing some better thing for them—not a return to that *Nova Terra* from which they had set out, but an entrance into that *Nova Terra et Novum Cælum*, that new earth and those new heavens where they have no need of the sun, for the Lamb is the light thereof, and there shall be no night there.

All that God did for these five men He will Himself make known hereafter. But we know that by all that pain and hunger and bitter weariness and loneliness and silence, He was seeking to allure them to Himself. What if the sledge on which the seaman Evans was carried was the fiery chariot that took him to God? What if poor Captain Oates on "going out" met Christ his Saviour at the tent door? What if the

three who had built their last tabernacle when their eyes were heavy with sleep awoke to find themselves in the company of Moses and Elijah and God's Well-Beloved Son? What earthly joy or honour that we may think they missed could for one moment compare with that?

The Quarrels of the Birds

I. ABOUT THE PRICE OF THEIR EGGS

Our Museum birds were often quarrelling. They would have fought if they could. No wonder; they had nothing to do, no nests to build, no young ones to rear, no food to gather. Their faces even were cleaned for them, though not nearly so often as they would have liked.

So they disputed about anything and everything; about their powers of flight, how high they could go, and how far without a rest; how many times, or how few, they could flap their wings in covering a mile; how much they could eat, and how long they could do without eating. The songsters, particularly the second and third-rate ones, were the most quarrelsome of all. The other birds never knew how to please them. They were constantly complaining that no interest was taken in them, yet they resented criticism; "they were not appreciated," and yet compliments irritated them even more than suggestions and advice.

The birds had a hot dispute a few weeks ago about the market value of their eggs. They had often argued about their shape and colour. Their value was a new subject which they had picked up from the conversation of some visitors who had been speaking about the egg of a Roc, the gigantic long-lost bird of Madagascar, that had been picked up in the sea. It had probably been distinterred from some sand-hill by a storm.

It was thirteen inches long and nine broad, and, it was understood, had fetched a high price.

This subject greatly excited them, but the clamour, which was deafening, was stilled at last by the Eagle, who said, "This is not a matter of opinion, Birds, but a matter of fact. Let us all find out before the new moon what money people give for our eggs, and let us have a regular orderly meeting to hear the results."

The proposal was at once approved of, and the Eagle was asked to act as judge.

On the day of the new moon all the birds in the Museum that could come were present. Some of them like the Auk and the Ostrich looked very conceited; but a good many seemed crestfallen.

The Eagle made a noble chairman. The slightest movement of his head brought the most unruly to order. No nobler beak was ever seen on a bench.

I need only tell you a few of the things that happened. The Eagle had scarcely uttered his first sentence, "Is there any bird present whose egg is valued at a penny?" when a Robin hopped out, and then followed the House Sparrow, the Starling, the Wren, the Blackbird, the Swallow, the Chaffinch, the Linnet, and so on.

When "Twopence?" was called, the Jackdaw came forward, followed by the Crow, the Tit, the Magpie, the Lark, the Wagtail, the Partridge and the Lapwing. The Pheasant, the Coot, the Guillemot, the Landrail answered at "Threepence?" The Teal, the Grebe, and our old friend the Puffin were fivepence.

When the Nightingale said "Eightpence" the Eagle could scarce believe it. "Eightpence? only eightpence? That egg in which 'There sleeps the music of the moon.' Eightpence? and mine is five and twenty shillings?"

When "Eighteenpence" was called, and the Cuckoo came out, there was a storm of hissing which the Eagle made no attempt to check.

The Raven was one and ninepence; the Great Snipe, the Emu, the Woodcock, the Osprey, and the Pelican, four shillings; the Vulture and the Snowy Owl five and sixpence; the Chough two shillings more.

When the Ostrich appeared at sixteen shillings there was great uproar, and several of the birds affirmed that three and sixpence was the proper price. The Ostrich explained that an egg of hers had been raffled at a church bazaar two days before for the money she had mentioned.

"Even an honest raffle," said the Eagle, "is a sinful thing—this must have been a dishonest one; but, of course, you are not to blame for that, only there is nothing in this for you to boast of. Three and sixpence is your price."

"But there was a picture painted on it," said the Ostrich.

"Did you paint it?" said the Eagle. "Three and sixpence is your price; go and stand below the Snipe, this moment!"

So the trial went on until far into the day, and only four birds had not been priced: the Knot, or Arctic Sandpiper, the Roc, the Auk, and another common-looking bird that was hiding its head in shame.

The Knot, having asked that it might speak, said that none of its eggs had ever been found; explorers had caught some of its little ones an hour or two after they had been hatched, but had never succeeded in getting the egg itself.

"I wish," said the Eagle, "that we could all say the same, and yet we should all like to see one of your eggs. Perhaps Dr. Nansen will succeed in this, as, we hope, in all the objects of his expedition, and I am sure you will not grudge him *one*—or *two*, one for his wife and one for the rest of the world."

The contest for the first place, it was well known, would rest between the Roc and the Auk. Of the Roc's eggs there are only six or seven in existence. Of the Auk's—though the bird itself lived in Scotland less than ninety years ago—there are only sixty-nine. One man in England owns seven of them, and keeps them in an iron safe!

The two birds were greatly excited; each seemed unwilling to be the first to speak. After a pause during which the silence was almost painful, the Roc being called on said, "My last specimen was sold for £100!"

Then the Eagle beckoned to the Great Auk.

"One of mine," was the proud reply, "was sold in 1887 for £160! But since that one has fetched £228!"

These last statements caused a great sensation in the court, the judge himself being visibly astonished. Presently he called for silence, and then asked the strange-looking bird that was still standing in front of him, near the Auk, who was

too proud to take the slightest notice of it, to hold up its head. It was a common little black hen!

"Why are you not in your proper place?" said the Eagle.

"The lowest price you mentioned," replied the poor bird trembling, "was a penny, but the last twelve eggs I laid were all sold to a poor widow for sevenpence."

"I don't know how much that is apiece," said the Eagle, "but certainly it is much less than a penny; yet I think it is more than a ha'penny."

"Oh, sir," cried the hen, "but they are only worth that when they are fresh and full of meat; the shells themselves are worth nothing. There is no place for me in this assembly."

"Yes, poor bird," said the Eagle, much moved, "there is a place for you. What is lying idle in a rich man's safe compared with making a poor widow glad and feeding her hungry and fatherless children? You are the noblest bird amongst us all; your place is—*first!*"

And behold there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

II. ABOUT THEIR NAMES

BIRDS were called *birds* or *bridds* long ago, because of the breadth of their wings. But how each kind of bird got its own particular name is another question, and it was about that the birds in the Museum were disputing keenly one day. The Curlew and the Peewit had discovered, almost at the same instant, that their names were

imitations of their cries. One discovery led to another, and presently there was a perfect Babel. The Rook was croaking and the Crow was cawing, and the Owl, wakened out of its sleep, was howling, the Nightjar was churring, and the Chough, which told us till we were tired that it used to be called Keo in England, was kae-kaeing, while every twenty seconds above all the uproar, we heard, although it was winter, the Cuckoo calling from its corner. Other birds were explaining, though no one was listening, that their names were expressive of their movements. The Northern Diver was eager to dive, and the Dabchick was saying, "If I only had a pond to fly over you would see at once from my dipping in the water that my right name is Dabchick." The Pheasant was telling all and sundry that it came from the river Phasis in Asia Minor, and the Turkey was fuming because people thought it had come from Turkey, when in reality it came from America in the time of Sebastian Cabot, three hundred years ago. The din became so great that the Eagle was appealed to once more to act as judge.

He had barely taken his seat when the Sparrow, which had found out two derivations of its name, hopped into the middle of the floor, and was with difficulty silenced.

"We will begin," said the Eagle, "where we left off last time, with our friend the Knot. Any of your eggs been found yet?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I'm glad of it. But you can tell us the meaning of your name?"

"I was called after King Canute."

"Who was he?" said the Eagle.

"He was a King of England who was born exactly nine hundred years ago, who, when his courtiers tried to flatter him, rebuked them by sitting on his throne on the seashore and showing them that the waves rolled up against him though he bade them halt.

"'The waves are stronger than I,' he said, and he would never put on his crown again. And they call me after him," continued the Knot "because I run lightly out and in upon the sand before the swelling, rushing tide."

"It has often struck me as strange," said the Eagle, "that a bird can do more in the water than a man."

"Oh no, sir," said the Petrel. "No bird ever yet walked on the water, though sometimes I almost seem to do it; but a man once did it, named Peter, and I'm called Petrellus, little Peter, after him."

Then the Petrel told the story of God becoming Man, and how He walked upon the stormy sea, and how Peter, loving Him, and knowing that his Master wished him to be like Him, and to live and reign with Him—"Where I am there shall also My servant be"—went to meet Him, and when he became afraid his Master took his hand, and he came back, not swimming, but walking with his Lord.

As the Petrel told all this, a great awe fell on the birds, and they drew closer together. There was a long and solemn silence, till at last the Eagle said, "Can it be true that God became

Man, and did the birds see Him who made them?"

"Yes," said the doves, "for we beheld His glory."*

Again there was a solemn pause. The birds were all thinking the same thing, but the Eagle put it in words, and said, "Shall any of *us* ever see God?"

But there was no answer.

And great sorrow fell on them and filled their hearts. Then, after a time, a voice was heard, so sweet and gentle and humble that no one recognized it at first, but it was the Sparrow's, and this is what it said, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? He sees us if we don't see Him."

"Yes," said the Raven, "and He hears us when we cry."†

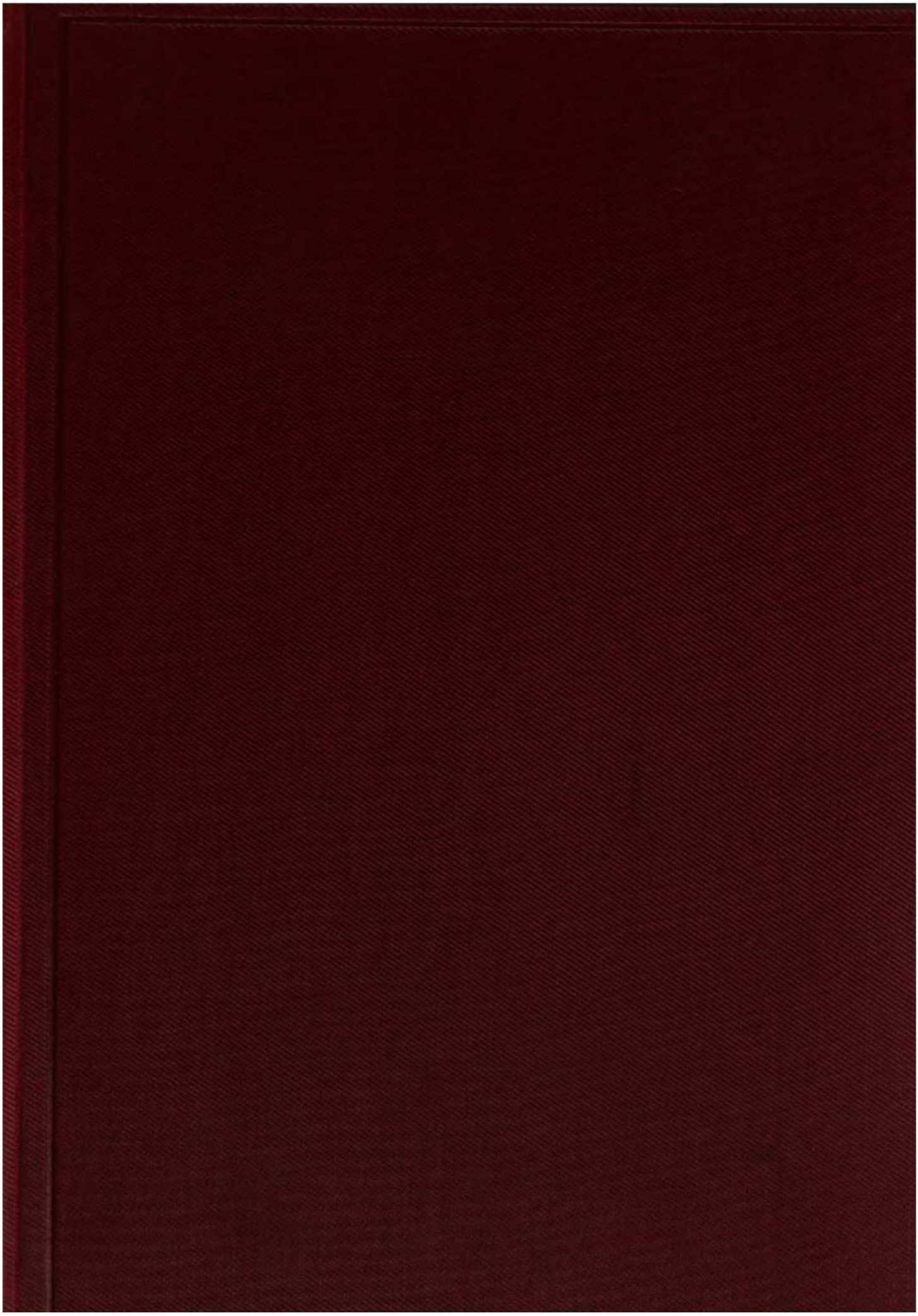
"And we must sing His praise, for His name is excellent,"‡ said the Eagle.

So I left them singing, but oh! how they would have sung if they had known that their Master not only thinks of them, but compares Himself to them when He speaks of man's salvation!§

* Luke ii. 24.

† Psalm cxlvii. 9.

‡ Psalm cxlviii. 10.

§ Matt. xxiii. 37.

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